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ABSTRACT

This booklet is an updated and expanded version of a 1983 guide for beginning and experienced vocational-technical education teachers. It contains strategies, resources, and references for further information. The nine chapters of the guide cover the following topics: (1) the role of the vocational instructor; (2) providing career guidance; (3) integrating academic and vocational education; (4) advising a vocational student organization; (5) providing work-based learning; (6) helping students make the transition from school to careers; (7) creating a school and community relations program; (8) evaluating and improving your program; and (9) professional development. (KC)

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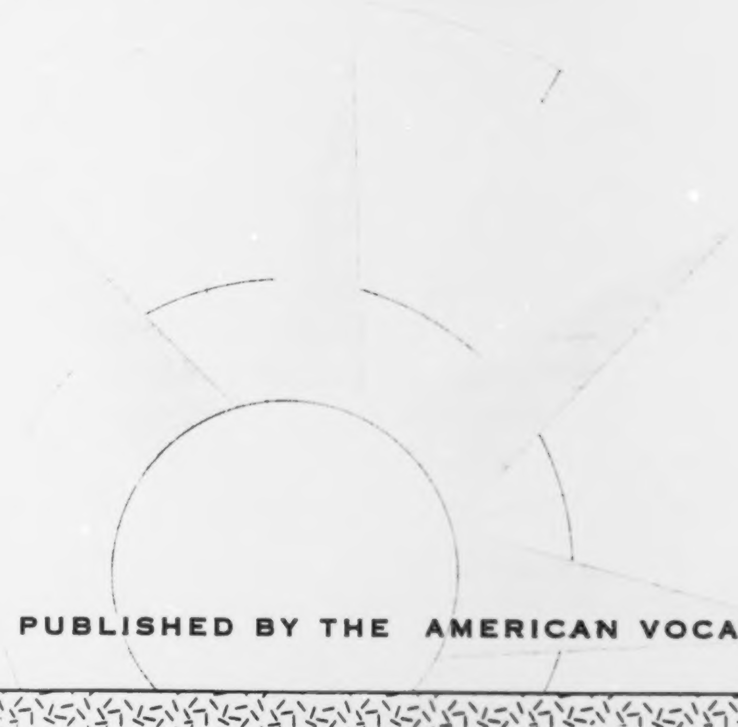
THE
VOCATIONAL INSTRUCTOR'S
Survival Guide



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The Vocational Instructor's Survival Guide

by Clifton L. Smith and Niel A. Edmunds

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Preface

Teaching is a challenging business. Teaching vocational-technical education is a complicated business.

This Vocational Instructor's Survival Guide is an updated and expanded version of one of the most popular publications AVA has ever published. The 1983 edition of the Survival Guide is still one of our best-selling books—from which we assume that many teachers need what the guide provides.

Teaching has changed tremendously in the past 12 years. With the increase in school-to-work programs, the traditional "classroom" has expanded to include worksites where students learn skills they will need in the world beyond high school or college. Your "colleagues" are now not only other teachers, but also employers and community members who have formed partnerships with schools. There is more emphasis on integrating vocational with academic teaching—but not always more clear direction on how to do so. Along with teaching your students well, you probably find yourself recruiting new ones, advising student groups and explaining and promoting vocational-technical education in your community.

The updated Survival Guide has been created specifically to help you meet these challenges. Written by two vocational-technical educators with experience in many settings, it is filled with strategies, resources and references for further information.

Whether you are new to the field or a seasoned teacher, you should find help within these pages.

About the Authors

Clifton L. Smith is a professor in the Department of Occupational Studies at the University of Georgia in Athens. He has also served as professor in the Department of Vocational-Technical Education of the University of Missouri-Columbia, as an instructor at Virginia Tech, and as a high school and postsecondary marketing teaching in New Mexico. He was a member of the AVA Board of Directors from 1984 to 1987.

Niel A. Edmunds has been involved in teacher education since 1968. He has served as a professor and university administrator at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (where he coordinated postsecondary performance-based teacher education), the University of Missouri-Columbia, and Nebraska State College. He has also taught high school and been a high school principal in Nebraska. He is a past president of the American Vocational Association (1988-1989) and served on the AVA Board of Directors from 1984 to 1990.

Chapter 1

The Role of the Vocational Instructor

Student success in any vocational program depends largely on the competence and enthusiasm of the individual vocational teacher. The role of a vocational teacher is complex. It involves the usual activities of a classroom teacher but also requires career guidance skills, administrative ability and the ability to bring the business and industry community into an alliance with the vocational institution or program.

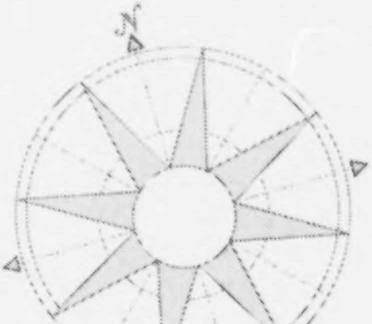
CHANGING RESPONSIBILITIES

In the past, being a successful vocational teacher simply meant being a good teacher; providing high quality instruction in the classroom, lab or shop was all that was expected. That's not true any more. Today's vocational instructor is held accountable for educating students to excel in the complex skills business and industry need, and to succeed in a highly competitive work environment.

Vocational teachers must now manage several unique responsibilities. As a vocational teacher, you are, at the same time, a teacher, career counselor, educational administrator, vocational student organization (VSO) advisor and public relations manager. While every vocational instructor cannot be equally proficient in each area of responsibility, it is important that careful and regular attention be given to each area. To help you meet this challenge, we will briefly discuss each responsibility in this chapter. The specific tasks you need to do to fulfill each responsibility will be addressed in further detail in the upcoming chapters of this book.

Teaching

The quality of teaching in your vocational program depends on your ability to develop curricula and provide instruction in group and individual settings. As a teacher, you are responsible for developing curricula for your classes (which must change regularly as the requirements of business/industry change), planning



lessons, maintaining a learning environment and evaluating learning outcomes. Good teaching means getting students to master the attitudes, skills and knowledge necessary for success in the world of work. Good vocational teaching requires skill in:

- task analysis
- stating performance objectives
- identifying prerequisite knowledge and skills
- selecting appropriate learning experiences and resources
- developing evaluation measures.

You should also be familiar with and use cutting-edge communications technology in your teaching. Videos, multimedia and computer software packages can hold your students' attention and get them interested in key concepts better than many traditional methods. CD-ROM, on-line services, e-mail and other information utilities can help you and your students access almost unlimited information and communicate more efficiently with you and each other.

Learning How to Teach, a guide published by the American Vocational Association to help new teachers master the art of teaching, should help you develop teaching skills.

Career Guidance

Because of your close association with students enrolled in your vocational program, you have a unique opportunity to provide students career guidance, and may be called on to help students with personal problems. As a part of your career guidance function, you can:

- help your students assess their interests and abilities
- provide information about career opportunities and trends in your occupational area
- help students make tentative or long-range career decisions related to employment or further education.

See Chapter Two for more information on the vocational teacher's role as career counselor.

Integrating the Curriculum

To effectively prepare your students for success beyond your program, you will need to develop strategies to integrate academic and vocational teaching. Chapter Three discusses curriculum integration and some of the models and effective strategies you may want to try using to connect the academic and hands-on aspects of learning.

Advising a Vocational Student Organization

Advising local chapters of a vocational student organization (VSO) is an integral part of your role. VSOs should not be overlooked because the VSO program of work can be coordinated with classroom and occupational experiences and teaches leadership and the techniques of working with others toward common goals. Guiding a VSO also gives you a chance to get to know students better as individuals and work with them in different settings. Chapter Four describes more fully the teacher's role as VSO advisor.

Providing Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning has always been part of vocational education. As more school systems around the country create school-to-work systems that connect learning in school with learning in the workplace, creating opportunities for work-based learning will become an even more important responsibility of yours as a teacher. You may find yourself helping to create the work-based component of a school-to-work system, or simply helping several students have successful workplace experiences. Chapter Five discusses how to provide work-based learning.

Helping Students Move On

It is also your responsibility to help your students move from your vocational program into a good job or further education. You should ease the transition from school to work (or school to postsecondary education) by:

- teaching students job search skills they can use for the rest of their lives
- helping students find appropriate jobs during and after completion of the vocational program

- helping students explore opportunities for further education
- helping students make occupational or personal adjustments in a job situation.

Chapter Six discusses how you can help students move successfully from school to work or further schooling.

Marketing Your Program

As a vocational teacher, you must perform a number of public relations tasks. The way these tasks are performed affects how various groups—including school personnel, local employers, parents and the broader community—view your vocational-technical education program. You will need to continuously interpret your program to these various audiences.

One of your key jobs is to make sure local businesses and civic and community organizations understand and have confidence in your program. The support of local businesses is vital if your program is to help all students reach their educational objectives. Chapter Seven gives you information on setting up a plan to market your vocational program to the school and community.

Evaluation and Improvement

As a conscientious teacher, it is your responsibility to regularly evaluate how well your program is meeting students' and employers' needs. You should also—for yourself as well as your students—be continually improving your skills as a teacher and your knowledge of the vocational-technical education field. Chapter Eight describes various strategies for evaluating your vocational-technical program, and Chapter Nine explores how you can work on your own professional development.

A WORD ON REWARDS

To be a good vocational teacher, you must be willing to change your teaching strategies with the times and to wear many hats. Yet vocational teaching can be as rewarding to you as to your students. A solid teaching performance by the vocational instructor may be a stepping stone for those who aspire to higher positions in education. And there is little work more rewarding than helping young people gain the knowledge and direction they need to lead satisfying lives.

THE IMPACT OF FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Vocational education has always been of major importance to the economic growth of the United States, and preparing people for the workforce has been a major concern of educators, politicians, business leaders and labor. The role of the vocational teacher has long been influenced by the needs of the country's workforce and the actions of its politicians. In describing your role as a vocational teacher today, it is useful to review the key legislation that has shaped vocational-technical education—and how it is taught—in this country.

Historical Perspective

The growth of the U.S. population during the 19th century, coupled with the shift of this population from rural areas to cities, gave rise to increased competition among members of the workforce and pointed out the need for salable skills and training to provide these skills. Additionally, the industrial revolution created a demand for trained labor to staff the newly mechanized factories of the industrial age. In the late 19th century and throughout the 20th, federal legislation was enacted to prepare individuals for this workforce. Key legislation included:

- ⚖ **Morrill Act.** The Morrill Act of 1862, the first federal legislation promoting vocational education, was aimed at preparing individuals for the "agricultural and mechanical arts" through the establishment of land grant colleges.
- ⚖ **Smith-Hughes Act.** The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 provided a continuing dollar appropriation to the states of approximately $7.2 million annually for vocational education in agriculture, trades and industry, homemaking and for teacher training in these fields.

- **George-Deen Act.** The George-Deen Act of 1936 extended the funding for vocational education, authorizing funds for the areas of agriculture, trade and industry, home economics and marketing education. An amendment to this act was the George-Barden Act of 1946, which authorized funds for expansion into the areas of guidance, teacher training and research.
- **National Defense Education Act.** Title VII of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 authorized funds to support programs for training highly skilled technicians in occupational areas necessary to the national defense. This was in direct response to the Russian launching of Sputnik, and the perceived need for more people working in the areas of engineering and aerospace.
- **Manpower Development and Training Act.** Under the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, appropriations were made to the Department of Labor, which designated vocational education programs in public education to provide training for poor people.
- **The Vocational Education Act of 1963.** Historically, early federal legislation aimed to fund vocational education for the more common occupations employing the greatest number of people. The 1963 act shifted the emphasis from specific vocational programs to groups of people requiring training, namely people with disabilities, people from disadvantaged backgrounds and students in postsecondary education.

  The 1963 act extended vocational-technical education programs and developed new ones, encouraged research and provided work-study programs and funds for constructing vocational schools. The act also created a National Advisory Council on Vocational Education and established State Advisory Councils on Vocational Education.
- **The 1968 Amendments to the Vocational Education Act of 1963.** These amendments gave special attention to postsecondary vocational education and to training certain categories of people, specifically people with disabilities and people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **The Education Amendments of 1976.** These reaffirmed the 1963 Vocational Education Act and 1968 amendments and additionally required the assignment of full-time personnel in the states to reduce sex discrimination and sex stereotyping in vocational education programs. The act also required states to develop five-year plans for vocational education, evaluation of local programs, establishment of local advisory committees, and a national vocational education data reporting and accounting system.

  Under the 1976 amendments, certain percentages of funds allocated to the states were required to be used for programs for people with disabilities, people from disadvantaged backgrounds and people with limited English-speaking ability.

The Perkins Act

In the past two decades, the shrinking number of new people entering the workforce, the rapid pace of industrial and technological change, and the higher skill requirements accompanying these changes has challenged the United States' ability to prepare workers for a competitive world market. Congressional concern about the nation's competitiveness and worker productivity has led to the passage of federal legislation that significantly affects the work of today's vocational educators.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984, the first major modification of vocational education legislation since 1976, emphasized three major objectives: modernization and improvement of vocational education programs; better access to quality vocational education programs for certain targeted population groups (people with disabilities, poor people, adults in need of training or retraining, single parents and homemakers, people in nontraditional programs and people in prison); and adequate funding for educational institutions in economically depressed communities.

Programs and services funded under this legislation included: training programs for specific occupations (such as agriculture, business, or health), vocational education curriculum development, and services such as career guidance and counseling.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 amended and extended the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984. Three major changes were designated in this act: (1) a shift away from the traditional job-skills orientation of vocational education to instruction in all aspects of an industry; (2) broad integration of academic and vocational education; and (3) greater emphasis on using vocational education resources in communities where the needs for improvement are the greatest. These changes encouraged higher performance standards, equal access and new programs for delivering vocational education.

This law required each state to create a set of core standards and performance measures to document the progress of vocational education students and programs and provided funding for tech prep programs.

Goals 2000: Educate America Act

The Goals 2000 voluntary program provides funds to states and school districts to carry out standards-based education reform activities. A majority of the funding is provided to school districts for developing or implementing local education reform plans—including developing curriculum—or for professional development activities.

School-to-Work Opportunities Act

Under this act, each state is eligible to receive funds for developing and implementing a school-to-work system. School-to-work systems help high school students meet state education standards by combining academics, career exploration and work-based learning, thereby giving real-world relevance to a student's education.

A student who successfully completes a school-to-work program may receive both a high school diploma (or its equivalency) and a recognized skill certificate acknowledging the completion of one or two years of postsecondary study. Students benefit from school-to-work programs by being able to move directly into good jobs, and employers benefit by acquiring a pool of well-trained applicants from which to select employees. Chapters Three and Five go into greater detail on two of the vocational teacher's key responsibilities in a school-to-work system: integrating academic and vocational education and providing work-based learning.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

In 1995, this act was reauthorized and revised to complement the standards-based education reform activities related to the Goals 2000 program. This act was the first time specific reference to vocational-technical education had been made in this legislation. The largest program under this act is the Title I program, which helps school districts provide additional educational services to disadvantaged students who are not achieving at their grade level. Reauthorization of the act also expanded other programs, including professional development to help teachers learn to teach in a standards-based school.

Consolidation and Other Changes

Legislators are currently considering several proposals to consolidate education and employment preparation in ways that would affect vocational-technical education. The impact of such a merger may include revision, consolidation or elimination of many federally funded programs that currently support vocational education and employment and training for youth. Other changes would remove the federal government's presence in many educational and social programs and move the responsibility for basic programs to state government.

The proposals for consolidating workforce preparation programs, including vocational-technical education, call for block grants to the states under which governors would decide how federal money would be spent at the state level.

There is also a renewed emphasis on restructuring public education to reflect improved academic standards. At the same time, the business community has been calling for a broad-based comprehensive approach for developing occupational and academic competence for all students, links between schools and employers, and workplace experiences for all students.

With potential major changes coming in federal policies for education and work preparation, vocational teachers need to be flexible and creative in integrating vocational and academic learning, coordinating work-based experiences with classroom learning for all students and bringing employers into the process of program development. As a vocational teacher committed to your profession, you may be called on to defend the relevance of vocational education in high schools. And you will need to have the knowledge and ability to build innovative systems of career preparation in a constantly changing environment.

Chapter 2

Providing Career Guidance

Because of the demand for higher skills and greater flexibility in the workplace, the classroom of the future will require more focused career guidance for students—guidance that goes beyond the school counselor's office.

Guiding individual students as they make a career choice provides an opportunity for you to make a difference in your students' lives. Although providing career guidance may be time-consuming, it can be a great source of personal satisfaction. Guiding students toward careers also provides you with feedback about what students think, what they need and how they behave.

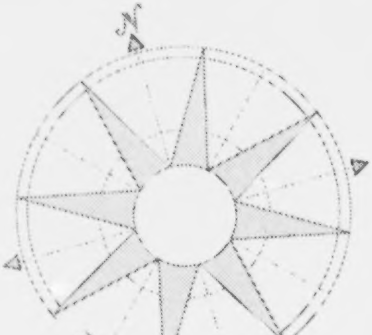
CAREER DEVELOPMENT

As a vocational teacher, you will probably be asked to participate in your school's career development program, particularly to make students aware of career opportunities in the vocational field you teach.

What is Career Development?

Career development is the process by which a student develops his or her self-concept, explores career options and acquires skills and information that will help him or her make decisions about the future. Career development should begin at an early age and continue through a person's lifetime. It should be incorporated into the curriculum of elementary and middle/junior high schools, high schools and postsecondary institutions.

Effective career development, as identified by the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, addresses three broad competency areas: self-knowledge and self-awareness, educational and occupational exploration, and career planning and decision-making. Career development is usually delivered in five phases, as described in the box on the following page.



Phases of Career Development

Career Awareness

Career awareness activities begin during the primary school years. Activities at this level help students acquire an awareness of self, the concept of work as a valued institution, an identification with workers and respect for people and the work they do. The goal is not to choose an occupation or career, but to become aware of the many types of work that people do.

Career Orientation

Career orientation is usually provided during the elementary and middle school years. Through participation in activities like simulation games, field trips to work sites and hearing workers speak to the class, students begin to acquire knowledge about a wide variety of fields.

Career Exploration

During the middle school years, students should more fully explore career possibilities and choose tentative career goals. Field trips, interviews with workers, job shadowing and classroom projects help students learn about specific jobs and work sites in greater depth.

Career Preparation

Once a student has decided on a potential career path, career preparation should begin in high school with the development of an individualized four- to six-year career program of study. Career preparation activities include developing occupational skills, applying academic theory in real-work situations and mastering general workplace competency skills. Further career guidance—such as information on career ladder and options for postsecondary education—should be part of this process.

Career Specialization

Students entering into postsecondary education begin more in-depth preparation for a particular occupation. Guidance in this phase should focus on the need to be a lifelong learner and to continually upgrade skills.

(paraphrased from *School-to-Work Transition: An Introduction to Georgia's Career Development Initiative.* Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education, 1994)

Working With School Staff

A career development program should be a coordinated effort of school counselors, classroom teachers and school administrators, with each group supporting the efforts of the others.

As a classroom teacher, you are a key person in an effective career development program. Students who are comfortable with you may come to you for career advice even before the school counselor. You should let students know that the school counselor can provide them more in-depth information about careers and education in all fields. But it is important for you to talk with your students about their career decisions and be willing to give them guidance. You should also emphasize the career implications of the subject matter you teach.

You may need to take the initiative to see that other classroom teachers are aware of the career implications of the subject matter they are teaching and that they can help students in their courses discuss relevant career decisions.

School counselors assist students with career assessment and planning, as well as developing a plan of study that outlines the academic and vocational courses to be taken to meet their goals. You need to develop a professional relationship with members of the guidance and counseling staff at your school. As a vocational teacher, you can help counselors by informing them of the content and focus of the vocational courses at the school. Provide school counselors with information and publications on career opportunities within your occupational area, especially in the local community. You can also help school counselors keep up to date on the changing requirements of business and industry, evolving occupations, current job placement opportunities and entrance requirements for specialized postsecondary programs.

In turn, school counselors can help you by sharing nonconfidential background information on your students that may help you advise those students on career decisions. School counselors can help you interpret test data that are usually part of a school's guidance program and that may help you work with your students in the classroom.

School administrators should take part in creating a career development program and involving all personnel, including providing school staff some training in career development and methodology. A career development program may also require an administrative shift in class schedules, school rules and curriculum priorities to accommodate career activities.

As a vocational teacher, you need to collaborate with your local school administrators in planning and implementing a career development program. You should work with your administration through frequent conferences and staff development activities and try to understand administrators' point of view (as they should try to understand yours) regarding the changes required to put a career development program into operation.

Working With Employers and Parents

Although they will not formally be part of your school's career development program, local businesses and parents can be important resources in career development, and you should work cooperatively with them.

It is important to foster relationships with businesses and employers in your community. Become personally acquainted with the managers and personnel directors in local businesses in your occupational area so you can find out about career opportunities for students. Local employers can provide opportunities for students to visit work sites and explore career options within an industry. When you find a business or industry that is especially interested in providing experiences for students, share this information with your colleagues so their students can benefit too.

You and the counselors in your school will need to work cooperatively with parents to help their children explore career options and form an individual career plan. It's a good idea to have group and individual conferences with parents so they understand your program and you develop a good working relationship with them.

Invite parents to your classroom to serve as guest speakers. Most parents are also workers who can share their career experiences with students. Using parents as resources also helps parents understand your vocational program and your career development activities.

PROVIDING CAREER GUIDANCE

Your responsibility for providing career guidance can include everything from keeping up with trends to helping students adjust to their first job. Your basic responsibilities include the following:

- **Help students assess their own interests, talents, strengths and weaknesses.** Point out each student's abilities as you observe her or his performance in class and in work-based experiences. There are many assessment devices you can use (see chapter appendix for resources on career guidance). You should give students ideas of career directions they might take that would allow them to use their talents and interests.
- **Become thoroughly familiar with all career opportunities available in your field.** You should know what various jobs pay, what skills and education are needed for each job, where job opportunities are and how one can advance up a career ladder. Share this information with your students in a systematic way.
- **Become extremely familiar with the employment needs in your local area and the skills workers need in each occupational area.** Build relationships with local employers and contact them frequently to keep aware of their need for workers. You should also use local employers as resources to help students explore careers. Invite employers from various career fields to talk to your students about opportunities in their field, and arrange for work-based learning experiences.
- **Inform your students about relevant opportunities for postsecondary education in your local area or within your vocational field.** Build relationships with local postsecondary schools and have representatives come talk to your students.

- **Direct your students to resources that will help them become knowledgeable about employment options in various occupational fields, educational requirements and general employment trends** (see section on resources below). Become familiar with the resources available in your school counselor's office and refer students to them.
- **Keep current on general employment and labor market information,** growth and non-growth occupations and the education and skills required for various promising jobs.
- **Keep up on trends in work and learning** and discuss them with your students. Help students understand the need for advanced skills and education for future work.
- **Explain to students and parents the goals of vocational and academic programs** in your school district, articulation agreements with postsecondary schools, and the options for students exiting programs at various points. Discuss with students and parents how each discipline in your school can contribute to preparing students for the workplace.
- **Help students handle the stress of their first work experience** and learn the expected behaviors and social skills of the workplace.
- **Help evaluate and refine** your school's career development program.

Career Planning Unit

You can help your students in the career development process by including a career planning unit in your vocational curriculum. Such a unit can synthesize much of the information and activities described above. See the chapter appendix for a suggested outline for a career planning unit. Portions of this suggested outline can be infused into different parts of the curriculum and taught in sections or as a full unit of instruction.

Career Development Portfolios

As part of a career planning unit, encourage each of your students to create an individual career development plan. Many schools have a system—usually coordinated by the school guidance office—for each student to develop an individual career development plan or portfolio. Each student maintains his or her portfolio throughout the school years, continually adding to and refining it as career development takes place. A career portfolio usually includes such items as:

- Career aptitude and interest test results
- Information on occupational clusters
- Assessment of their interest in various occupational clusters
- Listing of education and training requirements for jobs they are interested in
- Related personal information (such as resumes or letters of reference).

If your school uses individual career plans or portfolios, you should help your students add to their individual portfolios as you work with them to assess their skills, career interests and options, and their plan for pursuing a career. If your school does not have a system for developing career portfolios, you may want to help your students begin to create such a portfolio. There are many commercial resources available for creating such portfolios (see appendix).

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

There are numerous sources of information available to help both you and your students keep up on employment trends and career opportunities. You should use at least some of these resources to keep your own knowledge current, as well as direct your students to them.

- Government Agencies. Most federal agencies publish materials about occupations, which can be obtained directly from the agency producing them or from the Government Printing Office. The most-used volume in career center libraries is the *Occupational Outlook Handbook.* Published biannually by the U.S. Government (and also available from the American Vocational Association), it describes occupations, forecasts the demand for each occupation and indicates what qualifications are needed. The periodical

Occupational Outlook Quarterly offers timely information on various fields. *The Dictionary of Occupational Titles,* published by the U.S. Department of Labor, lists over 35,000 jobs currently performed in the United States. Many state government agencies also publish materials.

- **The National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee** is a federal commission that makes available information on careers and training opportunities around the country. NOICC also helps train school counselors to provide career information. Each state has a State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (SOICC), which collects and makes available information on careers, the local labor market and career training opportunities throughout the state.
- **Professional, Union, and Industrial Organizations.** Many occupational materials are available from professional and industrial associations and unions. Some of these groups have prepared publications describing their profession, the education and skills needed for various jobs and the occupational outlook in their field. Use your contacts with local businesses or professional associations to identify groups that might have information. Or consult an encyclopedia of associations, available in any library.
- **Individual Companies.** A number of national and international businesses publish occupational materials to recruit prospective employees, create an image of their company and perform a public service. Most of these materials are of high quality and provide good career information.
- **Newspapers.** In addition to the want ads, which may give some insights into local occupational needs, many newspapers feature career columns. Topics may include types of jobs and qualifications needed for them, job-hunting techniques and emerging careers. News articles often provide descriptions of new businesses or industries and new educational and training programs.
- **Periodicals.** Many magazines contain articles about specific occupational fields or have a regular feature on careers. Magazines like *Fortune, Business Week* or *Forbes* feature articles describing various jobs and work settings.
- **Radio and Television.** Many radio and television stations offer weekly programs that provide occupational information. Career information may be broadcast in news programs, special features and spot announcements.
- **Commercial Publishers.** There are dozens of companies that publish books, pamphlets, directories, videos and computer software designed specifically to provide occupational information. Specific books can be located by referring to *Books in Print,* (which lists all books in print according to subject) or by asking your public or school librarian for suggestions. Contact the American Vocational Association for its extensive catalog of books and other products. (See the chapter appendix for a list of some of the major publishers of career materials.)
- **Resource Persons and Agencies.** Workers, employers, retired persons and specialists in a career area are often valuable resources. Resource agencies include the local employment service office, apprenticeship councils, chambers of commerce, service clubs, private employment services and unions.
- **Industry Visits.** Workers in all fields usually like to discuss their jobs and show people what they do. Arrange for yourself and your students to visit workers on their job site and observe what they actually do. You will not only gain career information, you also create good public relations and may even provide job opportunities for your students.

PERSONAL GUIDANCE

When Students Come to You

Regardless of academic or social status, almost all students need some personal assistance—or at least someone to talk to—at some point in their school years. Considering that the student to counselor ratio can be as high as 400 to 1 in many schools, counselors may not have time to provide students the individual attention they need. Vocational teachers are in a unique situation to relate personally to the students in their vocational programs, with whom they work closely throughout much of the school day over a period of years.

Counseling services dealing with problems of personality, physical and emotional development, interpersonal relations and similar matters should be available to all students. Vocational teachers have not been trained to handle the serious social and emotional problems students may bring to them. A student might have a financial need, may be pregnant, may be suffering from physical abuse at home or may need legal aid or advice. Be prepared to refer these students to the school counselor or to other resources your school or community has available such as teen crisis centers, drug rehabilitation programs or self-help groups.

Talking To Your Students

The first time a student comes to you with a personal problem can be very daunting, and you may not know how to talk to that student. While you should refer students to additional sources of help, particularly if they have serious problems, you shouldn't hesitate to talk to them, or at least listen. Some suggested techniques for talking to students with problems are:

- **Be tactful.** Be careful to express your opinions in such a way that the student does not feel pressured to accept your view or act on your suggestions. Try to speak in a way that is supportive rather than critical.
- **Listen carefully.** Let the student do the talking. Listening attentively to the student will help him or her express thoughts freely.
- **Study the individual.** Try to understand the reasons and the emotions behind the situation. Students may not recognize internal motives that are contributing to their problems, and you can help by asking questions that give them insights into their own feelings and behavior.
- **Be thoughtful.** Try to understand the student's actions and words. Encourage the student to use clear thinking and to reach a decision.
- **Be patient.** Often many hours of listening and talking with the student will be needed. You will need to be patient as the student tries to explain the situation and explore what action is needed to resolve the problem.
- **Keep confidence.** The student who asks for help should be able to trust that you will not discuss the matter with anyone else (unless the person explicitly threatens to hurt someone, in which case you may have a legal obligation to report the threat).
- **Help the student get help.** If outside help is needed, find and use the professional or community resources available.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The choice of a career is one of the most important decisions a person ever makes. An individual is, to an extent, choosing his or her identity and how life will be spent. Yet young people often make the crucial decision of what career to pursue with little thought, information or assistance. You are in a position to make a life-changing difference by helping your students learn who they are and what role they want to play in adult life, and equipping them with the knowledge and skills to fulfill that role.

APPENDIX

Commercially Available Career Portfolios

- **Get A Life,** a career planning package developed jointly by the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee and the American School Counselors Assocation. Get a Life has several different elements that can be ordered separately or as a package, including a student portfolio, facilitator's manual, computer disk and a portfolio geared toward students in school-to-work systems (prices range from $30 to $185). For more information contact ASCA-Get a Life, P.O. Box 960, Herndon, VA 22070, 800-401-2404.
- **Your State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee** (SOICC) may publish and sell its own version of a career portfolio. Contact the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee at 202-653-5665 to get the address and phone number of your SOICC.

Resources for Career Information

The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* can be ordered through the catalog of the American Vocational Association.

For information on the *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, contact the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Room 2135, 2 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20212-0001. For a two-year subscription to OOQ, send $19 to Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250.

The Dictionary of Occupational Titles is available for $40.00 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402 (indicate that the stock number of the publication is 029-013-000-942).

Commercial publishers who produce career guidance materials include:

JIST
720 North Park Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3431
800-648-JIST

Meridian Education Corporation
Dept. CG-95
236 E. Front Street
Bloomington, IL 61701
800-727-5507

Center on Education and Work
Publications Unit, Dept. A
University of Wisconsin-Madison
964 Educational Sciences Building
1025 W. Johnson
Madison, WI 53706
800-446-0399

APPENDIX

Suggested Outline for a Unit on Career Planning

I. Career Decision Making

A. Self-assessment of personal characteristics
  1. Interests
  2. Abilities, aptitudes, skills
  3. Work values
  4. Personality characteristics
  5. Personal needs

B. Relate personal characteristics to occupational and lifestyle options
  1. Relate personal characteristics to appropriate occupations and occupational clusters
  2. Relate desired lifestyle to occupational options

II. Career Information

A. Use career information resources to explore and plan careers
  1. Identifying reliable sources of information
  2. Basic information needed to evaluate an occupation
    a. Job duties
    b. Education/training required
    c. Work environment
    d. Salary and benefits
    e. Outlook for employment
    f. Possible satisfactions
    g. Typical day, week
  3. Print and other resources on occupations

B. Education Options
  1. Identify academic, vocational, interpersonal and general skills common to most jobs in a specific cluster
  2. Explain the relationship between specific school courses, programs of study and extracurricular activities to jobs in a cluster
  3. Explain postsecondary educational options
  4. Differentiate among various types of postsecondary education and training options
  5. Relate postsecondary options to preparation required for specific jobs
  6. Factors to consider in selecting a postsecondary institution or program

III. The Decision-Making Process

A. Define the problem: What occupation should I choose?

B. Gather information
  1. Identify interests and aptitudes
  2. Develop a list of occupational alternatives based on self-information
  3. Collect occupational information

C. Evaluate information
  1. Compare and evaluate occupational information
  2. Evaluate own feelings and aptitudes
  3. Evaluate work values and career goals
  4. Eliminate unacceptable occupational alternatives

D. Choose the occupation you are best suited for now

IV. Making a Formal Plan

A. Formalize career and educational goals

B. Organize a formal plan for reaching career goal
  1. Develop plan for reaching immediate educational goal
  2. Develop plan for reaching postsecondary educational goal
  3. Outline major factors to consider in making employment plans

Chapter 3

Integrating Academic and Vocational Education

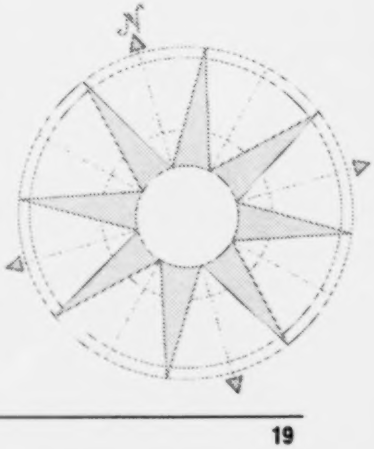
The education reform movement of the 1980s focused primarily on improving the academic skills of college-bound youth. Little attention was given to enhancing the academic competence of those not going to college or to providing education leading to job skills for students in the "academic" track. In many schools, academic and vocational teaching are still kept totally separate. However, recent national reports stress the need to overcome the disconnection between academic and technical education. Our schools need to provide all youth with an education that blends both types of learning.

As a vocational teacher in the 1990s and the next century, you will need to develop strategies for integrating academic and vocational teaching. The need for a more productive workforce and economic security for all citizens demands that teaching become more integrated.

WHAT IS INTEGRATION?

Integration involves the blending of skills from several disciplines. Integrating vocational and academic learning refers to blending the traditional content and teaching methods of academic disciplines—English, mathematics, science, social studies—with the more applied, "hands-on" content and teaching characteristic of vocational courses. Integration is a method of instructional delivery and class structure rather than a specific program. Integrated instruction usually implies infusing more academic knowledge and skills into vocational courses and applying academic concepts to occupational situations more in academic courses.

Integration can be as simple as having students in an English class write brochures for local businesses. Or it can be as complex as assigning academic teachers to work with vocational teachers within a career cluster to



creatively combine academic and vocational instruction. The idea is to make the content more relevant to all students.

WHY IS INTEGRATION IMPORTANT?

Making Learning Relevant

Most job tasks require that an individual combine several skills—such as listening, reading, calculating, estimating, describing and predicting. In most work, a person must integrate skills from several disciplines. But in most schools, the traditional disciplines—and academic and vocational teaching—are divided into separate classes and never related to each other.

The goal of combining academic and vocational content is to better prepare students for both work and lifelong learning. Research in the cognitive sciences indicates that the hands-on learning characteristic of most vocational programs can help students better acquire academic skills and transfer them to various situations. If the purpose for learning a specific skill is obvious, learning has more meaning and students are more motivated to learn.

The Perkins Mandate

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1990 (known as Perkins II) and the recently passed School-to-Work Opportunities Act make it essential that vocational teachers learn to integrate academic and vocational learning, as well as linking work-based and school-based learning. Integrating academic and vocational content is an essential element of a successful school-to-work system.

The stated purpose of the Perkins Act was to make the United States more competitive in the world economy by developing more fully both the occupational and academic skills of all segments of the population. Perkins II (Section 235) allocated funds "to provide vocational education in programs through coherent sequences of courses so that students achieve both academic and occupational competencies."

SCANS Skills

The integration of academic and hands-on learning is also an important part of teaching your students general, non-occupation specific skills that the Department of Labor has identified as essential for productive employment.

In 1991, the Secretary of Labor issued a report from the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). The report addressed skills needed to be productive in the workforce. After interviewing business and industry leaders, public employers, union officials and frontline workers, the Commission identified five major competencies and three foundation skills necessary for employment in high-performance organizations (see chapter appendix for a list of these skills).

The SCANS report indicated that these competencies and the foundation skills should be taught to all students in an integrated manner that reflects the workplace context in which the skills will be applied. The report indicated the need for a different structure of learning that responds to the changing nature of the workplace.

A learning and teaching approach that integrates academic and vocational skills and shows students how academic knowledge is applied in work situations is an effective way to teach the SCANS skills. The SCANS report provides a framework for helping students apply the content and skills they are learning in school to the world of work. (See chapter appendix for a comparison of the conventional classroom to a classroom based on the SCANS skills.)

APPROACHES TO INTEGRATION

Suggested Models

As a vocational teacher, you can use many different approaches to integrate academic and vocational education for your students.

A 1991 study prepared by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE) in Berkeley, California, presented eight models instructors or schools might follow for integration:

- **Incorporating more academic content in vocational courses.** With this model, vocational teachers modify their courses to include and emphasize academic content.
- **Involving academic teachers in vocational programs.** An academic teacher could team up with a vocational teacher to teach one or several classes—or academic teachers could assist vocational teachers in modifying the vocational curriculum to include more academic content.
- **Making the academic curriculum more vocationally relevant.** With this model, academic teachers modify their courses to incorporate specific occupationally related examples and applications. This model is being used in tech prep applied courses.
- **Aligning the curriculum by modifying both academic and vocational courses.** This approach changes the content of both academic and vocational courses, using more occupationally relevant information in academic courses and more academic content in vocational courses. Each course tries to connect academic content and theory with the application of knowledge and skills.
- **Using student projects as a form of integration.** This model centers on student projects in which the student combines material from different courses and disciplines. This design demands that each student synthesize the knowledge and skills from different courses rather than requiring the teachers to synthesize the curriculum.
- **The career academy model.** A career academy is a "school-within-a-school" organized around a broad occupational or industry area. Academic and vocational learning are integrated in a curriculum based on a single occupational cluster (such as health care or business) and delivered by a consistent group of teachers. Teachers coordinate their efforts closely and often teach as a team.
- **Occupational high schools and magnet schools.** Such schools are similar to career academies, but in the occupational or magnet school, the entire school is focused on preparing students for related careers within an occupational cluster. All teachers prepare students for work in one career area, and the curriculum for all students incorporates academic and vocational teaching in courses related to that cluster.
- **Occupational clusters, career paths and career majors.** This model offers all students in a school a choice of several distinct career majors, each based on a sequence of related courses tied to an occupational cluster. Each cluster offers students occupation-specific courses and the opportunity to develop vocational skills after they complete introductory courses. The clusters integrate academic and vocational teaching and use applied-learning techniques.

Collaborative Projects and Team Teaching

Collaboration between teachers is key to integration. To truly integrate academic and vocational learning in your classes, you will need to spend some time outside the class working with academic teachers. At the least, you will want to exchange information with these teachers and get ideas for how you can infuse academic content into your classes. You may also want to try collaborating on specific projects or team teaching a course or part of a course.

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) in its *High Schools That Work* program has successfully organized teachers in schools around the country into teams for integrating the curriculum. In the SREB model, teachers first cooperate in helping students improve their basic educational skills, such as reading, writing, mathematics and thinking. The teams then identify similarities in course content and choose a common theme to emphasize throughout academic and vocational courses. Teams develop collaborative projects that help students connect the academic skills they are learning with occupation-related skills. Many teachers use team teaching to implement these projects.

For example, one of the high schools with whom SREB works developed a project on the use of pesticides that integrated material traditionally taught in agriscience classes with skills and content usually taught in English, history and science classes. Students studied the effects of disease-causing pests throughout history (integrating history and agriscience), analyzed the volatility of chemicals found in pesticides (science and agriscience), and read and analyzed arguments about the use of pesticides in newspapers and magazines (English and agriscience).

Another SREB-sponsored project integrated curriculum from the building trades, drafting and horticulture classes into the traditional academic disciplines by having students perform activities related to constructing a house and landscaping the grounds—from writing a landscape maintenance plan to using math formulas in figuring costs. (Examples from schools in SREB's High Schools That Work program.)

From its experiences, SREB cites six important characteristics of teacher teams formed to integrate the curriculum:

- good communication
- joint planning time
- joint staff development
- visiting each other's classrooms
- interdisciplinary problem-solving
- support from school administrators

Applied Academic Courses

Some groups committed to education research and reform have developed and make available curriculum for applied academic courses. Such courses infuse applied learning into the traditional content and approach of academic courses. The most widely used applied academic courses have been developed by the Center for Occupational Research and Development (CORD). They include:

- Principles of Technology
- Applied Mathematics I and II
- Applied Communications
- Applied Biology and Chemistry.

These courses are intended to serve as an alternative core curricula in math, science and English. You may want to look over some of these commercially available courses and consider whether they could be used to modify the curriculum at your school or whether you could use any of the ideas to modify your own curriculum.

The Tech Prep Model

One education initiative that promotes increased cooperation and communication between academic and vocational education is tech prep.

Tech prep denotes a shift away from the traditional job-skills orientation of vocational-technical education and toward the broader purpose of using vocational education to teach academics and thinking skills and to link thought with action. Tech prep programs involve partnerships between academic and vocational teachers, as well as between secondary and postsecondary schools and education and business communities.

Tech prep programs create articulation agreements between high schools and postsecondary schools so that the courses students take in their last two years of high school are coordinated with the courses they will take in a two-year college program. Students can often receive college credit for courses taken in their junior or senior year of high school. The sequence of tech prep courses leads to a certificate or associate's degree in a technical or service field.

Tech prep articulated programs have a structured and closely coordinated curriculum for specific career fields. Tech prep courses integrate appropriate academic and vocational skills with critical thinking, problem solving and work ethic skills. Applied academic courses relating specifically to occupational skills are an integral part of tech prep programs.

If your school is already involved in tech prep, your vocational and academic colleagues will probably already have become involved with integrating the content of their classes. If your school is not involved in tech prep, you may want to talk with faculty and administrators about starting a tech prep program at your school.

Tech prep programs are developed by a local consortium. This consortium consists of at least one secondary school and one postsecondary education institution. A secondary school may be a local education agency, an intermediate education agency or an area vocational education school serving secondary students. A postsecondary institution may be either a nonprofit or for-profit institution of higher education, including community colleges, technical institutes and proprietary trade schools. Two-year apprenticeships are also included.

Every state has a tech prep coordinator who can give you information and assistance in starting a tech prep program. Many areas have a local tech prep coordinator. A number of organizations can provide you with information and resources on tech prep. Key organizations include the American Vocational Association, Center for Occupational Research and Development, Southern Regional Education Board and Center on Education and Work (see chapter appendix for addresses and further resource suggestions). These organizations all sponsor conferences that address tech prep and curriculum integration, among other issues.

By connecting academic and vocational content in your classroom and your school, you can help both students who are not planning to attend college (those sometimes referred to as the "neglected majority") and college-bound students who may lack exposure to occupational choices. With U.S. employers having difficulty finding workers with the academic, analytical and technical skills they need, it is essential that all students leave school with certain work skills and academic competencies. Curriculum integration can help bring us toward that goal.

APPENDIX

Resources for Curriculum Integration and Tech Prep Programs

Organizations

American Vocational Association
1410 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
800-826-9972

Center on Education and Work
University of Wisconsin-Madison
946 Educational Sciences Building
1025 W. Johnson
Madison, WI 53706
800-446-0399

Center for Occupational Research and Development
P.O. Box 21689
Waco, TX 76702-1689
800-231-3015

National Tech Prep Clearinghouse
Sangamon State University, F-2
Springfield, IL 62794-9243
800-533-8324

Southern Regional Education Board
High Schools That Work Program
592 Tenth Street, NW
Atlanta, GA 30318-5790
404-875-9211

Books

(available through the catalog of the American Vocational Association):

Getting Started in Tech Prep, by Dan Hull. A workbook to help you form your tech prep consortium and create a plan to guide you through developing your program.

Creating a Tech Prep Curriculum, by Walter Edling. Explains the components of a tech prep curriculum, provides several models and offers 13 case studies.

Tech Prep: Effective and Promising Practices Guide, by Gabrielle Banick Wacker. This guide highlights national, state and local tech prep practices proven to be effective.

Tech Prep Education: A Total Quality Approach, by Charles J. Law, Jr. This book analyzes tech prep's strengths and weaknesses and its relationship to vocational education.

Making High Schools Work, by Gene Bottoms, Southern Regional Education Board. Provides case studies of high schools that have successfully integrated academic and vocational education and describes best strategies to use.

Redesigning and Refocusing High School Vocational Studies, by Gene Bottoms. Examines ways that youth apprenticeships, academies or schools-within-schools and industry certification programs can be used to redesign high school vocational programs.

APPENDIX

The Conventional and the SCANS Classroom

The Conventional Classroom	The SCANS Classroom
Teacher knows answer.	More than one solution may be viable and teacher may not have it in advance.
Students routinely work alone.	Students routinely work with teachers, peers, and community members.
Teacher plans all activities	Students and teachers plan and negotiate activities.
Teacher decides method of assessment.	Students routinely assess themselves.
Information is organized, evaluated, interpreted, and communicated to students by teachers.	Information is acquired, evaluated, organized, interpreted, and communicated by students to appropriate audiences.
Organization system of the classroom is simple: One teacher teaches 30 students.	Organizing system is complex: Teacher and students agree on organization and reach out beyond school for traditional information.
Reading, writing, and math are treated as separate disciplines; listening and speaking often are missing from curriculum.	Knowledge needed for problem solving is integrated; listening and speaking are fundamental parts of learning.
Thinking is usually theoretical and "academic."	Thinking involves problem solving, reasoning, and decision making.
Students are expected to conform to teacher's behavioral expectations; integrity and honesty are monitored by teacher; student self-esteem is often poor.	Students are expected to be responsible, sociable, self-managing, and resourceful; integrity and honesty are monitored within the social context of the classroom; students' self-esteem is high because they are in charge of their own learning.

Source: "Move to Create High-Performance School." (1992, May 11). *Vocational Education Weekly* 5(6), pp. 3-4.

APPENDIX

SCANS Three-Part Foundation

Basic Skills: Reads, Writes, Performs Arithmetic and Mathematical Operations, Listens, and Speaks

A) *Reading*--locates, understands, interprets written information in prose and in documents such as manuals, graphs, and schedules
B) *Writing*--communicates thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in writing; and creates documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts
C) *Arithmetic/Mathematics*--performs basic computations and approaches practical problems by choosing appropriately from a variety of mathematical techniques
D) *Listening*--receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and other cues
E) *Speaking*--organizes ideas and communicates orally

Thinking Skills: Thinks Creatively, Makes Decisions, Solves Problems, Visualizes, Knows How to Learn, and Reasons

A) *Creative Thinking*--generates new ideas
B) *Decision Making*--specifies goals and constraints, generates alternatives, considers risks, and evaluates and chooses best alternative
C) *Problem Solving*--recognizes problems and devises and implements plan of action
D) *Seeing Things in the Mind's Eye*--organizes and processes symbols, pictures, graphs, objects and other information
E) *Knowing How to Learn*--uses efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills
F) *Reasoning*--discovers a rule or principle underlying the relationship between two or more objects and applies it in solving a problem

Personal Qualities: Display Responsibility, Self-Esteem, Sociability, Self-Management, and Integrity and Honesty

A) *Responsibility*--exerts a high level of effort and preservers toward goal attainment
B) *Self-Esteem*--believes in own self-worth and maintains a positive view of self
C) *Sociability*--demonstrates understanding, friendliness, adaptability, empathy, and politeness in group settings
D) *Self-Management*--assesses self accurately, sets personal goals, monitors progress, and exhibits self-control
E) *Integrity/Honesty*--chooses ethical courses of action

Source: *Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills* (1991).

APPENDIX

SCANS Five Competencies

Resources: Identifies, Organizes, Plans, and Allocates Resources

A) *Time*--selects goal-relevant activities, ranks them, allocates time, and prepares and follows schedules
B) *Money*--uses or prepares budgets, makes forecasts, keeps records, and makes adjustments to meet objectives
C) *Material and Facilities*--acquires, stores, allocates, and uses materials or space efficiently
D) *Human Resources*--assesses skills and distributes work accordingly; evaluates performance, and provides feedback

Interpersonal: Works with Others

A) *Participates as Member of a Team*--contributes to group effort
B) *Teaches Others New Skills*
C) *Serves Clients/Customers*--works to satisfy customers' expectations
D) *Exercises Leadership*--communicates ideas to justify position, persuades and convinces others, responsibly challenges existing procedures and policies
E) *Negotiates*--works toward agreements involving exchange of resources, resolves divergent interests
F) *Works with Diversity*--works well with men and women from diverse backgrounds

Information: Acquires and Uses Information

A) *Acquires and Evaluates Information*
B) *Organizes and Maintains Information*
C) *Interprets and Communicates Information*
D) *Uses Computers to Process Information*

Systems: Understands Complex Interrelationships

A) *Understands Systems*--knows how social, organizational, and technological systems work and operates effectively with them
B) *Monitors and Corrects Performance*--distinguishes trends, predicts impacts on system operations, diagnoses deviations in systems' performance, and corrects malfunctions
C) *Improves or Designs Systems*--suggest modifications to existing systems and develops new or alternative systems to improve performance

APPENDIX

SCANS Five Competencies Continued

Technology: Works with a Variety of Technologies

A) *Selects Technology*--chooses procedures, tools, or equipment including computers and related technologies

B) *Applies Technology to Task*--understands overall intent and proper procedures for setup and operation of equipment

C) *Maintains and Troubleshoots Equipment*--prevents, identifies, or solves problems with equipment, including computers and other technologies

Source: *Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills* (1991).

Chapter 4

Advising a Vocational Student Organization

Vocational student organizations (VSOs) are intended to be an integral part of the vocational-technical education curriculum. VSO activities provide students with opportunities to apply learned skills, develop leadership abilities and gain recognition.

As a vocational teacher, it is your responsibility to act as the chapter advisor for the vocational student organization that represents your teaching area. (A list of recognized VSOs is on the following page.) If there is no VSO in your area associated with the occupational area you teach, you should consider starting one.

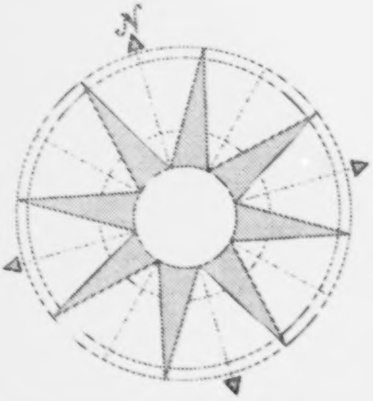
If properly organized, a local VSO chapter will help you as an instructor rather than adding to your workload. Participating in a vocational student organization can give your students learning experiences that may be more relevant and long-lasting than those in the formal classroom. A local VSO chapter also gives your vocational program visibility. The activities of your local chapter give interested parents and community leaders a chance to get involved in vocational-technical education and educate the public about your program and what it has to offer.

STARTING A LOCAL VSO

Many factors go into making an effective local chapter of a national VSO. Among these is an attentive and energetic membership, an interested and sensitive teacher-advisor, the selection of good group officers, and cooperation on the part of the institution and the local business community. However, the most important factor is the interest of the student members and their determination to make their chapter an outstanding group of their own creation.

The following are the steps you will need to take to organize a local vocational student organization and develop its program of activities.

- Contact the person designated as the "State Advisor" of the VSO you are interested in,



usually someone employed by the state Department of Education. The State Advisor will send you a packet of introductory information about that VSO.

- Consult the administrator or vocational director of your school regarding the institution's rules on clubs and organizations.
- Order an official handbook for the vocational student organization from the national headquarters. (A list of the national offices for all VSOs is provided in the chapter appendix.)
- Take key students to visit an established local chapter of the VSO and see what the members do, to generate student interest.
- Form an Organizing Committee of committed, capable students.
- Have the Organizing Committee review all basic documents and materials of the national organization and order promotional materials to carry out a membership campaign.
- Write a tentative constitution.
- Plan an organizational meeting of potential members. At this meeting you should discuss whether the group definitely wants to organize a local chapter, review the tentative constitution and vote on ratifying the constitution.
- Write a statement with these first core members affirming your intention to organize.
- Kick off the membership campaign; begin to sign up members and collect dues.

National Vocational Student Organizations

The national vocational student organizations currently recognized by the U.S. Department of Education are:

Business Professionals of America (BPA): The goal of BPA is to develop students' leadership abilities, interest in the American business system and competency in office occupations within the framework of vocational education. BPA is divided into three student divisions—Secondary, Postsecondary and Associate—with activities and programs geared to each level.

Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA): DECA, for students in marketing, management and entrepreneurship programs, provides educational and leadership development activities that can be integrated with marketing instruction. DECA is divided into two student divisions—High School and Delta Epsilon Chi at the postsecondary level.

Future Business Leaders of America-Phi Beta Lambda (FBLA-PBL): FBLA (secondary) and PBL (postsecondary) prepare business education students for employment by promoting competent, aggressive business leadership, increasing understanding of the American free enterprise system, helping students establish career goals, promoting efficient financial management and developing self-confidence in its members.

National FFA Organization (FFA): FFA is an organization of public school students preparing for careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture. Activities, honors and award programs provide students with incentives and practical experiences in applying knowledge acquired through class and laboratory instruction.

Future Homemakers of America/Home Economics Related Occupations (FHA/HERO): Future Homemakers of America is for students enrolled in vocational home economics through Grade 12. There are two kinds of chapters. FHA chapters emphasize consumer home economics, while HERO chapters emphasize home economics related occupations.

Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA): HOSA serves students pursuing careers in health care. Its mission is to promote career opportunities in the health care industry and enhance the delivery of quality health care to all people.

National Postsecondary Agricultural Student Organization (PAS): PAS is an organization for students taking courses in agriculture, agribusiness, horticulture and natural resources in postsecondary schools offering associate degrees or vocational diplomas or certificates. PAS, an integral part of postsecondary agricultural instruction, helps students explore agricultural occupations, set educational objectives and carry out a plan to meet these objectives.

National Young Farmer Education Association (NYFEA): NYFEA is the VSO for adults enrolled in agriculture education. Its goal is help its members in operating their agricultural business.

Technology Student Association (TSA): TSA is the national organization for technology education/industrial arts students, promoting related leadership skills and community service projects.

Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA): VICA is a broad organization for trade, industrial, technical and health occupations students. with chapters in secondary schools, postsecondary schools and junior and community colleges.

(See chapter appendix for addresses and telephone numbers of all national organizations.)

- Plan the first officer elections (set deadline for dues in terms of upcoming elections).
- Conduct officer elections.
- Hold a meeting with newly elected officers (using parliamentary procedure) at which you petition the state association for a charter.
- Have the president appoint basic committees so the organization can begin to function, including Program of Activities Committee, Finance Committee, Public Relations Committee, Social Committee and Community Service Committee.
- Secure the necessary equipment and materials for conducting meetings. Most VSOs have traditional items—things like gavels and emblems that hang on the wall—that are used for conducting meetings or performing ceremonies such as initiations and awards presentations.

PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

Once you have set up a basic structure for your VSO chapter, you will need to plan a program of activities and begin holding regular meetings. Chapter meetings may be scheduled during the regular activity period of the institution, during regular class periods (once or twice a month as necessary) or during the evening or any time convenient to most students. Often committee meetings can eliminate the necessity of having many chapter meetings of the total group.

When planning activities, keep in mind the needs of individual students and try to make sure each member has the opportunity to participate. Ideally, each activity should coordinate with the instructional plan of your vocational program. All activities should also be approved by your local school administration.

Vocational student organization activities are usually classified under five general groupings.

Professional Activities

Such activities strengthen students' professional knowledge and skills. Suggested activities are talks by guest speakers, panel discussions, videos and similar presentations that connect with topics studied in class. For example, a DECA chapter might invite as a speaker a business person from the community to talk about retail trends in the community and what local marketing research shows—or a personnel manager to discuss trends in hiring.

Business and professional meetings should be regularly scheduled. The business portion of a VSO meeting provides students an opportunity to learn parliamentary procedure and develops skills students can use in civic and professional groups when they leave school and enter the work world.

Competitive events are also considered professional activities. Vocational students organizations sponsor contests designed to test students' skills in their vocational area. For example, DECA sponsors competitions in areas such as apparel and accessories, food marketing, finance and credit, general merchandise retailing and entrepreneurship. VICA sponsors contests in occupational specialties related to the trade and industrial areas, such as masonry, plumbing, electrical, carpentry and automotive. Occupation-specific competitions usually involve written tests, interviews and actual demonstrations of proficiency.

Additional individual or team competitions may include areas of leadership, such as parliamentary procedure or public speaking. Chapter competitions that encourage chapter members to work together—such as outstanding chapter or best community service program—are also sponsored by national and state vocational student organizations. Each national vocational student organization, as well as the state organization, provides a complete listing of the competitive events available to students.

Such events provide an incentive to improve career-related knowledge and skills and help students learn the importance of preparation and participation. They are also a way to recognize and reward students' talents and hard work.

Civic and Service Activities

Projects such as campus improvement campaigns or participation in fairs, trade shows and

VSO Activities Should:

- Encourage interaction among students and between students and advisor, developing a rapport not possible in the formal classroom.
- Allow students to express their personality and creativity in a social environment.
- Establish higher standards of performance for students and the advisor—and motivate students to reach their maximum potential—through challenging activities and competitions.
- Develop students' character and give them an understanding of civic and social responsibilities.
- Provide a way to recognize students' talents and achievements.
- Strengthen students' confidence in themselves and their work.
- Stimulate students' interest in their career field and give them a better understanding of their career options.

other community-wide events involve the VSO in the school and broader community. Such projects are often conducted in cooperation with local business and industrial organizations, school organizations and civic groups.

VSOs can also organize charity projects, such as collecting and distributing food to poor people, collecting funds for a charitable organization (e.g., Muscular Dystrophy, March of Dimes) or assisting in community campaigns.

Social Activities

Social events can often be integrated with professional activities such as an employer-employee appreciation event. Social activities help students learn social graces and develop confidence, skills that contribute to employability and employment. Such functions also give students a chance to network, particularly when community leaders are invited to participate. Suggested activities are: an employee-employer banquet, a parents' night program, a tea or breakfast for faculty members, a luncheon (patterned after a civic club luncheon) and recreational activities like dances, picnics or barbecues.

Financial Activities

Fund-raising activities (where permitted) are usually necessary to support the financial obligations of the VSO, such as expenses for field trips or other travel. When carefully selected and managed, such activities not only yield funds, but provide excellent learning experiences.

Some important factors to consider in selecting fund-raising activities are: whether the activity will help students learn something in their field; whether all members will have an opportunity to participate; the potential financial return on the investment of time and effort by students and the advisor; and whether the activity will meet the approval of the school.

Value of Activities

All VSO activities can help students develop leadership and interpersonal skills as they engage in individual and group activities, hold offices, work with representatives of other student organizations and compete with other students. Students may have an opportunity to travel to state and national leadership conferences. They may also visit other chapters, tour organizations and establish contact with successful individuals from business and industry.

The variety and number of VSO activities depends to a large extent on the ingenuity and vision of the student members. In general, it is a good rule of thumb to have about half of the group's time spent on professional activities, with the remaining time divided between civic, social and fund-raising functions. Foremost consideration should be given to the educational value that the project or activity will have for students. However, as advisor you should (within reason) let the students take the lead in deciding how they want to use their VSO and what kinds of activities they want to put time into. The list on this page gives characteristics of appropriate VSO activities.

YOUR ROLE AS CHAPTER ADVISOR

You are in a unique position as the advisor to your local VSO chapter. As advisor, your role is to stay in the background and offer assistance when needed; as a vocational instructor your role is to plan, direct and guide the activities of the vocational program. These differing roles can be hard to reconcile. To resolve this conflict, you will need to develop advisory techniques that enable you to influence group activities without dominating them (see suggested basic advisory techniques).

A key aspect of your role as teacher-advisor is to develop a sense of responsibility in your students. Encourage your students to exercise initiative and delegate as much authority and responsibility as you think each student is capable of accepting. By demonstrating faith in your students, you will develop mutual confidence and respect and increase students' desire to accept greater responsibilities.

Basic Techniques For Advising Your VSO

- Develop an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.
- Develop the ability to convey ideas and suggestions in such a way that students accept them as their own or accept them as being the best course of action.
- Base your leadership on a constant awareness and sympathetic understanding of the needs and motivations of your students.
- Set an example by establishing high standards, communicating directly and displaying confidence in the students.
- Bear in mind that your advice may not always produce the immediate results that you expect. When this happens, react diplomatically so you will not undermine your relationship with students.

APPENDIX

National Vocational Student Organizations

Business Professionals of America
5454 Cleveland Avenue
Columbus, OH 43231
(614) 895-7277

Distributive Education Clubs of America
1908 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 860-5000

Future Business Leaders of America-
Phi Beta Lambda
1912 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 860-3334

National FFA Organization
P.O. Box 15160
5632 Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway
Alexandria, VA 22309
(703) 360-3600

Future Homemakers of America/Home
Economics Related Occupations
1910 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 476-4900

Health Occupations Students of America
6309 North O'Connor Road
Suite 215
Irving, TX 75039
(214) 506-9780

National Postsecondary Agricultural
Student Organization
Agriculture and Technical College
Cobleskill, NY 12043
(518) 234-5571

National Young Farmers Education Association
P.O. Box 15160
5632 Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway
Alexandria, VA 22309
(Executive Director can be contacted at
334-288-0097)

Technology Student Association
1914 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 860-9000

Vocational Industrial Clubs of America
P.O. Box 3000
Leesburg, VA 22075
(703) 777-8810

Chapter 5

Providing Work-Based Learning

Providing your students with chances for learning based in actual work experience is a key responsibility for you as a vocational teacher—and one that is likely to increase as school-to-work transition systems become established in schools around the country.

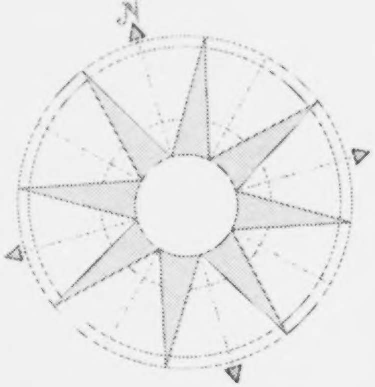
SCHOOL-TO-WORK: FOR ALL STUDENTS

Over the past several years, teachers, politicians and business leaders have acknowledged that American schools do a poor job of preparing youth to make the transition from school to work. This lack of a formalized transition system in the United States has compounded the social problems many youth face.

Although vocational teachers have long recognized the importance of guiding students into the world beyond high school, until recently most academic educators did not feel responsible for their students once they left school. This lack of perceived responsibility was coupled with a singular focus on preparing students for college—an emphasis that may have caused non-college-bound students to discount their academic experiences and see no connection between their education and work.

The recent understanding that schools need to prepare young people better for both work and further education led to the enactment of the 1994 School-to-Work Opportunities Act. The act is intended to develop school-to-work transition systems in which all students choose a career field and, through integrated school- and work-based learning in that field, gain the skills needed to move successfully from high school to postsecondary education or high-skill, high-wage jobs.

School-to-work systems are based on the integration of work-based and school-based learning, the integration of occupational and academic learning, and links between secondary and postsecondary education. Ideally, all students passing through a



school-to-work system attain a high school diploma, a skill certificate in their chosen field, and, if appropriate, a certificate or diploma recognizing successful completion of one to two years of postsecondary education.

A school-to-work transition system must incorporate three basic elements:

- School-based learning
- Work-based learning
- Connecting activities between school- and work-based learning

APPROACHES TO WORK-BASED LEARNING

Creating or facilitating work-based learning experiences requires vocational educators to form partnerships with people and institutions outside their program—particularly with employers and local business groups, labor organizations and some community groups.

There are a number of approaches to work-based learning, ranging from formal apprenticeship programs to community volunteer projects.

Cooperative Education

Cooperative education, sometimes referred to as on-the-job training or co-op, is the most commonly available form of work-based education in public secondary and postsecondary schools. Cooperative education features agreements between schools and employers to provide on-the-job training related to the student's area of vocational study and based on objectives jointly developed by the school and employer.

In a typical co-op program, employers provide paid part-time jobs in the student's vocational field. Students usually work in the afternoon and attend both academic and occupational-related courses during the rest of the school day. Most co-op programs last about a year.

The coordinating vocational teacher's role is to arrange placements, develop a training plan with the employer specifying what the student is expected to learn on the job, and make periodic supervision visits to the employer's place of business. The teacher-coordinator also consults with the employer to evaluate the student's job performance.

Youth Apprenticeship

Like cooperative education programs, youth apprenticeship combines paid work and on-the-job training with related classroom instruction emphasizing contextual, real-world learning. Youth apprenticeship programs generally focus more intensely than co-op programs on developing high skills for a specific field, usually a technical field. They also generally last longer than co-op arrangements, from two to three years, and focus more on work-based than school-based learning.

While apprenticeship programs are usually more focused on work-based learning and specific skills, both co-op and apprenticeship require:

- **Active participation of employers.** Employers provide participants not only jobs, but also training and mentoring opportunities, and help develop curricula and industry standards.
- **Integration of work-based and school-based learning.** Classroom instruction and workplace experiences are integrated so that one reinforces the other, allowing for the acquisition of increasingly difficult and complex skills. Employers and school personnel work closely together to coordinate the student's learning.
- **Integration of academic and vocational learning.** Cognitive and technical skill development, high academic standards and connections between technical skills and academic content break down the traditional barriers between academic and vocational learning.

Youth apprenticeship programs generally award students an occupational skill certificate. In addition to a high school diploma or postsecondary certificate or degree, participants receive a certificate of mastery of occupational skills. Most employers within the industry for which participants train recognize this certificate.

Some youth apprenticeship programs are combined with a tech prep curriculum. The work-based component of the youth apprenticeship program linked to the technical curriculum and articulation agreement with a postsecondary school gives students an opportunity to take advanced technical courses while in high school and possibly receive postsecondary credit toward an associate's degree.

This combination of "real" work experience, student-mentor relationships, integration of education and work, and a certificate of accomplishment provides students with structured pathways for moving from school to work. Because they contain most of the elements required of federally funded school-to-work systems, youth apprenticeship programs can be a strong foundation on which to build a school-to-work system.

Registered Apprenticeship

These training programs usually serve students who have already completed their high-school education. Registered apprentices are under contract with employers, a local union and the local joint apprenticeship training committee. For a specified period of time, apprentices function as full-time workers with normal working conditions under the supervision of skilled workers (journey workers). They receive part-time related instruction in school for a few hours per week.

Sponsors (either unions, employers or trade associations) plan, administer and pay for registered apprenticeship programs and set qualification standards that apprentices must meet. When a worker successfully completes an apprenticeship program, he or she receives a certificate of completion from the Department of Labor or a federally approved state apprenticeship agency.

A variation of the registered apprenticeship program is the School-to-Apprenticeship program, which allows students to begin registered apprenticeships while still in high school. Students enter the apprenticeship program in their senior year and hold a part-time job in a registered apprenticeship slot, then continue apprenticeship training after graduation.

Key Elements of Registered Apprenticeship Programs

- last a specified length of time (one to six years—usually four years);
- cover all aspects of the trade;
- include related instruction, which generally takes place in the classroom and involves the techniques of the trades as well as the theory behind techniques (144 hours per year is the recommended minimum);
- place apprentices under experienced journey workers who gradually lessen their supervision;
- increase pay periodically throughout apprenticeship;
- include a signed apprenticeship agreement between sponsor (employer, employer association, or union) and employee;
- are registered with and must meet standards of either the federal government, federally approved state apprenticeship agency, or the Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT).

Students receive both academic credit for the apprenticeship and hours credited toward attainment of apprenticeship credentials.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics identifies several common characteristics of registered apprenticeship programs (see box above).

Job Shadowing

Job shadowing allows students to learn about a job or occupation in an area of their interest by following (shadowing) a worker on the job for a set period of time (such as a day, a week or one day a week for several months). This experience gives students an opportunity to observe academic and occupational skills being put into practice in a workplace setting. Job shadowing is usually a temporary, unpaid orientation to the world of work, but can enhance the integration of school and work.

Community-Based Volunteering

Many teachers do not consider using volunteer service as a way to prepare youth for the transition from school to work. But individual voluntary service—involving unpaid work in the community with individuals or an agency—can teach important employability and work skills and complement paid work or cooperative education experiences. You can encourage your students to consider this way of gaining experience by making them aware of volunteer opportunities in the community related to their career field.

Internships or Practicums

Internships or practicums tend to be one-time, short-term placements that are directly related to a student's professional goals. They are most commonly associated with postsecondary programs and usually come toward the end of the student's education. Students are usually not paid or are offered only small stipends. Typically, a student participates in a specific project and the work is structured and monitored by the institution.

Internship/practicum programs generally provide broad career awareness and a general orientation to work as opposed to specific career preparation. Studies of internships have suggested that they provide opportunities to practice skills and apply theory learned in the classroom to actual work settings and to develop positive work habits and attitudes.

Clinical Experiences

Students preparing for jobs in the health-care field are generally required to perform work-based learning called clinical experience. In clinical experience, hands-on training in a hospital or medical facility is correlated with the curriculum. Students get experience with patients and procedures under the supervision of experienced health care providers.

ELEMENTS OF WORK-BASED LEARNING

Several essential elements must be in place for work-based learning to be successful. As an instructor, it is your responsibility to make sure these elements are in place for your students.

School-site Mentor

One individual from your vocational program should be designated as the primary person responsible for overseeing the work-based learning experiences of each student. This person, usually called the school-site mentor, has primary responsibility for arranging for each student's placement in a work-based learning site, developing the learning plan with the employer, evaluating the student's progress, counseling the student and serving as an intermediary among the various individuals involved—student, employer, work-site mentor, parents and others.

Mentoring generally refers to an older, more experienced person helping a younger one in a one-to-one relationship. Mentors can offer individualized instruction, career information and exploration and advice on career planning and success in school.

As a vocational teacher, you will probably be called on to serve as a school-site mentor for one or many students involved in work-based learning. The school-site mentor and the work-site mentor must work closely together to ensure that a student achieves both the academic and technical competency requirements.

The school-site mentor is responsible for ensuring that students meet the objectives of the work-based learning component and that work-based learning experiences run smoothly and correlate with the school-based learning program. Mentors should have release time from their regularly scheduled teaching assignment to accomplish these tasks.

In your role as school-site mentor you will need to be skilled at planning and time management. You may need to urge your school to provide you some professional development or training for this role.

Even if you are not the main person arranging and overseeing work-based experiences for your students, you will probably have some responsibility for setting up or maintaining key elements of work-based learning.

Selection of Work Sites

Not every business in a community makes a suitable place for students to engage in work-based learning. Businesses cooperating with a school in providing work-based learning opportunities must make a major commitment to helping students learn. They must provide students with a variety of experiences and be willing to appoint an experienced employee to serve as a supervisor and/or mentor to the student. Once mentors are named, the employer must commit to give the mentor release time to work with the student and the school supervisor to develop the learning plan and evaluate student progress—as well as time for teaching the student the skills outlined in the training/learning plan.

The business must be able to provide a sufficient number of regularly scheduled employment hours throughout the year for the student to accomplish the objectives outlined in the training/learning plan. The employer must be willing to pay the student a minimum wage as well as develop a progressive wage scale for the student as she or he becomes a productive worker within the enterprise.

In a true work-based learning environment, employers provide much more than a paid job to the student. They give students an opportunity to develop the technical skills required of an occupation as well as providing personnel to assist in a student's occupational and social adjustment to the work environment.

Work-site Mentor

The success of the work-based learning segment of a vocational program depends on both the match between the job placement and the student and the quality of instruction that the student receives at the work site. The key individual in that instruction is the designated work-site mentor or supervisor.

A mentor provides guidance and encouragement to the student as well as being involved in teaching work skills and job responsibilities. The mentor performs a number of functions, including orienting the student to the business, training the student, helping evaluate the student and counseling the student on matters related to work and school. An effective mentor must possess both key personal qualities—such as good communication skills, patience and the ability to win a student's trust—and technical competencies.

You should meet the individual assigned to be your student's work-site mentor and make sure the person seems to have these key skills. Ideally, you should have the right to approve the chosen mentor or raise objections if you feel an inappropriate person has been selected.

Training Agreement or Memorandum

It is best to have an agreement or memorandum that defines the training and personal responsibilities to which the employer, the school, the student and the parents (or guardian) have committed themselves. Although not a legal document, a training agreement serves as an understanding among all parties. The following topics are usually included in such an agreement: duration of the training period; the minimum/maximum hours of work per week; wage agreement; responsibilities of the employer, school, parents and student. (See chapter appendix for a sample training agreement.)

Training or Learning Plan

The learning or on-the-job experiences a student will receive at the work site should be delineated in the training or learning plan. The training plan should outline the skills that will be required of the student, as agreed to by the job supervisor, the vocational teacher and the student. A student should be receiving instruction in specific skills at the work site, instruction that enables her or him to receive a skills certificate as defined by the industry for which they are preparing and as recognized by other employers in the industry. The employer should certify the student's attainment or mastery of these skills.

In addition, as specified in the STWOA, a student should receive training in all aspects of

Teaching Strategies to Reinforce Work-Based Learning

- Create classroom lessons that reflect the demands of the workplace and convey specific on-the-job performance requirements to students.
- Emphasize demonstrations, performance modeling and supervisor coaching as the primary means of teaching students.
- Test students in ways that measure such job-specific criteria as performance quality, safety and production rates.
- Emphasize quality and productivity by applying reasonable pressure on students to perform tasks correctly and on time—as determined by industry standards.
- Encourage students to work in teams to complete learning assignments. Be sure to match more experienced students with less experienced students.
- Use actual work-site materials (such as manuals, installation instructions, safety materials and tools) as part of lesson content.
- Issue supplies, tools and equipment in a way similar to that of the work site.
- Organize the teaching area like the work site typical of whatever industry your students are preparing for.
- Whenever possible, use real products and "customer relations" between student and customer as part of the classroom projects or work.

an industry. The Perkins II legislation defined mastery of "all aspects of an industry" as: "All characteristics of the industry or industry sector the student is preparing to enter—including planning, management, finances, technical and production skills, and technology, labor, community, health and safety and environmental issues related to that industry." This means that the instruction students receive in their chosen career major should include not just the technical skills related to that industry, but an understanding of the broader issues and skills involved. How much emphasis on certain aspects of the field—such as health and safety—would vary with the nature of the industry.

To receive instruction in all aspects of an industry, students may need to rotate through different positions or departments at the work site. Your school-based curriculum can supplement this instruction by integrating these topics into classroom lessons or projects. (See chapter appendix for a sample learning plan.)

Assessment and Evaluation

There are a number of ways to evaluate a student's progress in work-based learning. The key is to document the student's achievement and measure progress toward reaching the skills outlined in the training or learning plan.

Evaluation needs to measure a student's progress in mastering occupational skills, work attitudes and conduct, and personal traits and attributes. Regular work site evaluation and review of a student's performance must be conducted to link the school-based and work-based portions of the program to create a connected program of study for the student.

Generally, it is the vocational teacher's responsibility to create rating forms and written evaluations that are then completed by the employer. Ideally, however, the teacher and employer develop the rating form together and evaluate the student together. (See the chapter appendix for a sample rating form.)

Rating forms and written evaluations should be only one tool used to obtain an overall rating of a student's performance. Working with the employer, you should use a variety of devices such as portfolios maintained by the student, written work site examinations and observation to accurately assess your students and help them reach a desirable skill level.

After an evaluation is completed, an in-depth review conference including the student, his or her school supervisor and the workplace mentor should be held to reflect on the student's accomplishments as well as areas for improvement. The student's overall evaluation must include an assessment of academic performance, an assessment of progress in attaining skills identified on the training/learning plan and an assessment of attendance, behavior and attitude at school and on the work site.

REINFORCING WORK-BASED LEARNING

For workplace learning to be effective, vocational teachers must also develop curriculum, instruction techniques and assessment methods that link academic and vocational instruction and connect school-based and work-based learning. You may want to consider using teaching strategies that reinforce not only the content students are learning at the workplace, but also the way workers are instructed and expected to perform to a certain standard. The U.S. Department of Labor has developed teaching strategies that reinforce the culture and demands of the workplace (see box on previous page).

The school-to-work model—in which, ideally, all students participate in work-based learning—is likely to be the wave of the future in American public education. All teachers will need to be competent in integrating school- and work-based learning. As a vocational teacher with expertise in creating and managing work-based opportunities, you can lead the way.

APPENDIX

Sample Training Agreement

Student: ______________________ Job Title: ______________________

Business: ______________________ Telephone: ______________________

Supervisor/Employer: ______________________ Title: ______________________

Training Period Begins: ____________ Ends: ____________ Rate of Pay: ____________

Student Career's Objective: ____

To participate in the work-based learning component of the vocational program, all parties must agree to the following:

All Parties

1. The agreement will not be terminated without the knowledge of all parties concerned.
2. The teacher-coordinator and the training sponsor will cooperatively develop and update the student's training plan.
3. The student may withdraw or transfer from a training station when it would enhance the student's educational opportunities.
4. The student will work a minimum of 15 hours each week, but not more than 25 hours.
5. All complaints should be addressed to and resolved by the teacher-coordinator.

The Student:

1. will follow the policies, rules and regulations of the school and the business.
2. will provide advance notification of absence to the employer and the teacher-coordinator.
3. will not seek additional part-time employment while enrolled in the work-based learning component of the vocational program.
4. will complete and submit records of work experiences as required by the school.

The Parents:

1. will take responsibility for the personal conduct of the student at school and at work.
2. will provide transportation to and from the work station.
3. will encourage the student to carry out duties and responsibilities effectively.

The Employer:

1. will employ the student for an average of at least 15 hours each week in order to receive course credit.
2. will assign a supervisor to the student who will work with the teacher-coordinator in developing the student's training plan and evaluating the student.
3. will follow state and federal employment and compensation regulations as they apply to the student.
4. will prohibit the student from working if he or she has not been in school.
5. will compensate the student at the prevailing wage of other workers doing similar work.

APPENDIX

Sample Training Agreement Continued

The Teacher-Coordinator:

1. will evaluate the on-the-job performance periodically through out the year and the results of the evaluation will be discussed with the student.
2. will assist the student in securing employment at an approved place of business.
3. will work with the employer or the designated supervisor to develop a training plan for the student.
4. will counsel the student about his or her progress on-the-job.
5. will determine the student's grade, in consultation with the employer or designated supervisor, for the work-based learning component.
6. will fairly enforce policies, rules, and regulations.

We the undersigned, agree to the conditions in this agreement.

____
Student Date

____
Parent/Guardian Date

____
Employer Date

____
Teacher-Coordinator Date

School: ________________________________
Address: ________________________________
____
Phone: ________________________________

APPENDIX

SampleTraining Plan/Evaluation

(For a student preparing for position as Bank Teller)

Student: ______________________ Job Title: ______________________

Business: ______________________ Telephone: ______________________

Supervisor/Employer: ______________________ Title: ______________________

Training Period Begins: ____________ Ends: ____________ Rate of Pay: ____________

Student Career's Objective: ______________________________________

Evaluation of Specific Occupational Task or Skills

Ratings are assigned by the teacher-coordinator in conjunction with the employer

Rating Scale: 1 (Can perform task satisfactorily without supervision)
2 (Can perform task with supervision--needs additional work)
3 (Cannot perform task satisfactorily)

	Evaluation Periods			
Specific Occupational Task or Skill	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Answers the telephone in a businesslike manner				
Greets all customers				
Directs customers to proper services/departments				
Handles customer inquiries				
Interprets business policies to customers				
Handles customer complaints appropriately				
Demonstrates the proper handling of the money (counting, packaging, identifying fraudulent money and/or practices)				
Identifies proper endorsements on checks				
Demonstrates the proper handling of the following negotiable instruments:				
travelers checks				
personal checks				
company checks				
cashier checks				
certified checks				
dividend checks				
fraudulent checks				
Others identified by employer:				

APPENDIX

SampleTraining Plan/Evaluation Continued

Evaluation of General Job Performance Task or Skills

Ratings are assigned by the teacher-coordinator in conjunction with the employer

Rating Scale: 1 (Excellent, above average)
2 (Acceptable, but improvement possible)
3 (Not acceptable, needs significant improvement)

	Evaluation Periods			
General Job Performance Task or Skill	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Maintains appropriate personal appearance				
Follows company policies				
Uses/maintains materials and equipment properly				
Cooperates with others				
Demonstrates responsible behavior				
Demonstrates interest and enthusiasm				
Demonstrates honesty and integrity				
Uses time wisely				
Reports to work on time and when scheduled				
Produces quality work				

General Comments:

Period 1: ______________________________

Period 2: ______________________________

Period 3: ______________________________

Period 4: ______________________________

Signatures:

Period 1: Employer Date Student Date Teacher Date

Period 2: Employer Date Student Date Teacher Date

Period 3: Employer Date Student Date Teacher Date

Period 4: Employer Date Student Date Teacher Date

APPENDIX

Evaluation of General Work Based Performance

Student: ______________________ Job Title: ______________________

Business: ______________________ Telephone: ______________________

Supervisor/Employer: ______________________ Title: ______________________

Training Period Begins: ____________ Ends: ____________ Rate of Pay: ____________

Student Career's Objective: ____

Directions: This rating sheet provides a practical method through which the ability of the student can be judged with a reasonable degree of accuracy and uniformity. Indicate your evaluation of the student by checking the appropriate block by the phrase which seems to fit the student the best.

Grading Period: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (Circle one)

ATTENDANCE

1. Punctuality
   - ( ) Always on time
   - ( ) Occasionally late
   - ( ) Requires occasional reminding
   - ( ) Often late--job apparently of secondary importance
   - ( ) Always late

2. Dependability
   - ( ) Perfect record since last rating
   - ( ) Rarely absent
   - ( ) Frequently absent--but for cause
   - ( ) Poor record--requires counseling
   - ( ) Unsatisfactory--work suffers

3. Notification
   - ( ) Always notifies in time
   - ( ) Notifies but usually too late to get substitute
   - ( ) Occasionally late or absent without notification
   - ( ) Requires inquiry as to why late or absent
   - ( ) Often fails to notify

PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS

1. Appearance
   - ( ) Neat and in good taste
   - ( ) Neat but occasionally not in good taste
   - ( ) Sometimes careless about appearance
   - ( ) Untidy
   - ( ) Unsuitable for job

APPENDIX

Evaluation of General Work Based Performance Continued

2. Personality
    - (   ) Exceptionally pleasing--a decided asset
    - (   ) Makes good impression--wears well
    - (   ) Makes good first impression only--doesn't wear well
    - (   ) Makes fair impression only
    - (   ) Creates unfavorable impression

3. Tact and Courtesy
    - (   ) Shows exceptional tact and courtesy
    - (   ) Tactful and considerate of others
    - (   ) Occasionally untactful and inconsiderate
    - (   ) Attains goal but arouses disagreement
    - (   ) Often produces difficulty

CAPACITY

1. Ability to Learn
    - (   ) Learns with exceptional speed
    - (   ) Grasps instructions readily
    - (   ) Average ability to learn new things
    - (   ) Somewhat slow in learning
    - (   ) Limited in learning new duties

2. Initiative
    - (   ) Always finds extra work to do
    - (   ) Pushes work through on own initiative
    - (   ) Normal supervision required--not a self starter
    - (   ) Needs considerable supervision
    - (   ) Must always be told what to do

3. Judgment
    - (   ) Outstanding ability to reach sound and logical conclusions
    - (   ) Action generally based on good reasoning
    - (   ) Average judgment
    - (   ) Usually makes decisions without considering all alternatives
    - (   ) Conclusions often faulty

ATTITUDE TOWARD JOB

1. Interest
    - (   ) Shows intense enthusiasm and interest in all work
    - (   ) Shows interest; enthusiasm is not sustained
    - (   ) Passive acceptance; rarely shows enthusiasm
    - (   ) Shows little or no interest
    - (   ) Dislikes work

APPENDIX

Evaluation of General Work Based Performance Continued

2. Cooperation
   - ( ) Goes all out to collaborate with associates and management
   - ( ) Promotes collaboration and good will
   - ( ) Moderately successful in cooperating with others
   - ( ) Cooperates reluctantly and sometimes causes dissension
   - ( ) Uncooperative--often produces trouble

3. Responsibility
   - ( ) Seeks additional responsibilities
   - ( ) Willingly accepts additional responsibilities
   - ( ) Reluctant to accept additional responsibilities
   - ( ) Avoids responsibility
   - ( ) Cannot be depended upon

JOB PERFORMANCE

1. Accuracy
   - ( ) Rarely makes mistakes
   - ( ) Above Average
   - ( ) Average
   - ( ) Below Average
   - ( ) Highly inaccurate

2. Neatness
   - ( ) Takes pride in appearance of work. Has "sense" of neatness
   - ( ) Usually turns out neat work
   - ( ) Apparently lacks "sense" of neatness. Requires reminding
   - ( ) Too often sacrifices neatness for quantity
   - ( ) Majority of work must be done over

3. Quantity
   - ( ) Unusually high output--meets emergency demands well
   - ( ) Consistently turns out more than average
   - ( ) Finishes allotted amount
   - ( ) Does just enough to get by
   - ( ) Amount of work done is inadequate

COMMENTS

What do you consider to be this student's strongest points? ____________________

What do you consider to be this student's weakest points? ____________________

What steps can we take to correct the weaknesses? ____________________

____________________ ____________________

Employer Signature Date Teacher Signature Date

Chapter 6

School to Careers: Helping Students Make the Transition

As a vocational teacher, it is your responsibility to help students make a smooth and successful a transition from your vocational program to the world of work or further schooling. Your success will be evaluated in large part by your program's placement record. Yet placement is only one aspect of helping students make this transition. Students must also realize that their learning does not stop after graduation and that they will need to continue their education to keep up with the changing technology that affects their jobs or to be considered for many of the better jobs.

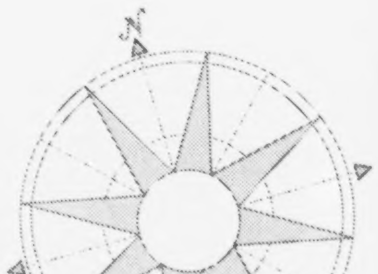
EDUCATION PLANNING

Many of the most desirable occupations of the future will require a minimum of two years postsecondary education. And all jobs of the future will require that workers have specific skills and knowledge to do the job and that they remain lifelong learners to maintain their knowledge base and perform at higher levels.

Recent studies have shown that the additional cost of education or training is often quickly paid back in higher earnings. Increased earnings often last a lifetime, making a significant difference in a worker's lifestyle.

Educational planning requires students to think through the education and training they will need or want for their professional or personal goals. Secondary students need to consider postsecondary education; certain two-year postsecondary students will need to think about continuing on to institutions that grant baccalaureate degrees; and many four-year students will go on to graduate school.

Careful planning of how to use time and money will be required for most students to reach these goals. Even students who plan to enter the labor market directly upon leaving the vocational program may need to get further education later to advance their career and will need information to do so.



You will need to assist your students in their educational planning and guide them to sources of information about further educational programs related to their vocational area. Some of the major sources of information about education and training programs are:

- People: Individuals associated with institutions, organizations or companies—and former students—can provide information about the education and training requirements for an occupational area.
- Two- and four-year institutions, which publish student guides describing the programs they have available and admission policies.
- Commercial companies, which publish directories and information about two- and four-year postsecondary institutions and other educational programs.
- Professional and trade associations, which publish materials about the education and training needed by their members.
- Computerized databases that list available education programs and help students with educational planning. Such databases are available in most community colleges.

HELPING STUDENTS FIND EMPLOYMENT

Many students will decide to enter the labor market right after completing the vocational program (and may seek further education at a later time). As a vocational teacher, you have a responsibility to help your students make the transition from school into employment. This responsibility involves not only helping students find jobs, but also teaching them how to look for jobs themselves and how to hold on to a job. Certain job search techniques have been found to reduce the time it takes to find a job and lead to better jobs. It is essential for vocational teachers to know these techniques.

Locating Job Possibilities

Students completing a vocational program and wanting to enter the world of work will need information about job openings. This information can be gathered from many sources, including:

- **School placement centers.** Schools are increasingly recognizing that part of their responsibility to graduates is helping students secure a job when they leave. Most postsecondary schools and vocational schools and some public high schools have established placement centers that provide specific information on job openings and general information on conditions of employment within occupational areas.

  Students must usually register to use the services of the placement office, which involves completing forms and securing letters of recommendation that are placed in a student's file. The student's file is then forwarded to interested employers at the student's request. Placement centers usually charge no fee, or at most a nominal fee ($2-$10).
- **State employment agencies.** Every state has a number of local employment offices. The purpose of these agencies is to match unemployed people with appropriate jobs. Students may register and select or be referred to prospective employers who have solicited workers through the state agency. Local employment offices can also provide information about state or federal job opportunities. There is no fee to use a state employment office.
- **Private employment agencies.** In most cases, private employment agencies charge a fee to find a person a job. The fee must be paid whether the job works out to the applicant's liking or not. For this reason, private employment agencies are usually a last resort. Nevertheless, many reliable commercial organizations are available to help students find employment.

  Before a student enters into any agreement with a private employment agency, he or she must determine who pays the fees. Fees vary considerably, from less than five percent of the first year's salary on up. As the applicant's salary goes up, the fee for placement also increases. Some private employment agencies have many "fee-paid" jobs (jobs in which the employer, rather than the job-seeker, pays all or part of the employment agency's fee). A job-seeker may indicate to the employment agency that he or she is only interested in fee-paid or partial fee-paid positions.

- **U.S. Office of Personnel Management.** The U.S. Government employs civilians in a number of occupational fields at military bases and in government positions. Each state has a main branch office and several local offices, which maintain a regularly updated listing of civil service positions available across the state. Applying for a job with the federal government involves taking an aptitude test called the civil service exam and filling out standardized government forms.
- **City, county, and state government.** Most cities, counties and states have a wide range of positions. The telephone directory for a given city will contain a listing of city and county personnel offices as well as the state personnel office, if there is one in that particular city. Some cities have an intergovernmental job office that has information on all city, county, state and federal positions available in a given month. These offices are listed in the Yellow Pages under "Employment."
- **Chamber of Commerce Directory.** Each state, through its Chambers of Commerce, publishes a directory of all manufacturers and other major employers within the state. Local Chambers of Commerce publish directories specifically for their geographical area. Each entry in the directory lists the company name, address, telephone number, products or services and number of people employed.

  All local Chamber of Commerce offices have a directory containing the addresses of other state and local chambers. Students wishing to relocate to a specific city may want to order the directory for that city, usually available for a small fee.
- **Newspaper ads.** Help-wanted ads appearing in the Sunday newspaper for a given city can be of valuable assistance to students seeking employment in that city. Most public and school libraries carry newspapers from several large metropolitan areas.
- **Yellow Pages.** Another source of help for students planning to relocate for employment is the telephone directory for the area to which they are moving. The Yellow Pages in any telephone directory provides an alphabetical index to hundreds of potential employers. Telephone directories for specific cities can be obtained at libraries or the local telephone company offices.
- **Nonprofit organizations.** Often professional associations, unions and other organizations provide placement services for those entering or progressing in a specific occupational field. As a teacher, you may be a member of professional associations within your field and should be aware of associations related to the field that may have placement services. Help make your students familiar with such services and determine if they can be placed on job listings.
- **Personal sources.** The best and simplest way of learning about job openings is through personal sources such as family, friends and acquaintances, who hear of job opportunities through work or social contacts. More jobs are probably obtained through this source than through any other.

Using the above sources, a student can select any city in the United States, analyze the city for job possibilities in their field and come up with a list of potential employers in or near that city.

PREPARING EMPLOYMENT DOCUMENTS

Once students have compiled a list of possible employers, they must know how to go about contacting the employers and requesting a position. This involves learning such job-seeking skills as resume writing, developing a letter of application, preparing work samples, completing job applications and confirming references.

Preparing a Resume

A resume is a concise description of career goals, education, experience and hobbies. A resume highlights for an employer the applicant's experience and qualifications. There is an abundance of literature extolling the virtues of hundreds of different resume formats, but the key to a successful resume can be summed up in two words: brevity and depth. A one- or two-page (maximum) resume is best.

Taste, judgment and common sense dictate what is included in a resume. But at a minimum, a resume should present the following:

- identifying personal information
- a well-stated occupational objective
- relevant educational history
- employment experience
- military service (if relevant)
- any special interests or awards the person has received.

Personal Information: The only personal information needed on the resume is the job seeker's complete name, address and telephone number. Such things as race, age, sex, marital and family circumstances and physical description should not be included.

Occupational Objective: The occupational objective should be a precise statement of the student's career goal. It should be broad enough so that it is not limiting, but narrow enough to show the student has definite plans. A well-written occupational objective for a drafting student might read:

"To work in a drafting position that will allow me to apply my knowledge, skills, and training and to advance at a rate in accordance with my performance on the job."

Educational History: The section of the resume dealing with education should first list all courses of study that relate to the position the student is seeking (it is not necessary to list individual classes taken in a program, unless they highlight the applicant's qualifications). Education related to the career field should be given a more detailed treatment than other entries in this category. Any degree or certificate earned should be listed, along with a brief explanation of all specialized training. Other education should be listed in reverse chronological order.

Employment Experience: The employment experience section of the resume should begin with jobs, if any, that relate directly to the position the student is seeking. Other jobs should be listed in reverse chronological order. An applicant should attempt to list some type of work on the resume, even if the work performed does not relate directly to his or her field. An employer may be impressed to see that a student worked his or her way through school, for example, regardless of the type of work performed because having done so shows dedication and initiative.

Military Service: Military service should be treated as a combined educational and employment experience. Give special attention to specialized training and positions held within the military, especially if they relate to the position being sought.

Personal Interests/Awards: The final two sections—personal interests and any awards received—are another way to catch the interest of the potential employer. Employers are human too. A hobby or an award might arouse enough interest in a potential employer to get the applicant called in for an interview, and securing an interview is the purpose of the resume and letter of introduction.

References: It used to be common practice to list references on a resume. Now, however, most applicants state on their resume "references available on request" and provide references only after an employer has expressed interest. Most employers will not check references until after they have interviewed an applicant.

The resume should be prepared with a word processing software program and printed on a laser printer. Reproductions of the resume should be done on high-quality paper at a professional photocopying business.

See the chapter appendix for sample resumes of students with and without related employment experience.

Letter of Application

The letter of application (or "cover letter") may be the first contact a potential employer has with the student, especially if the student is contacting out-of-town employers. Because first impressions are lasting, a concise, well-written letter is vital. The letter of application contains four basic components: the introduction, the job request, a brief statement of qualifications and the closing. The goal of the letter is to interest or impress an employer so much that the employer contacts the applicant for an interview.

The introduction tells briefly who the student is (i.e., "I am an architectural drafter with specialized training in residential and commercial design and drawing.") The job request explains what the student wants—a job (i.e., "I plan to relocate to your area as soon as I am able to secure a responsible position in my field. I have examined the job market and would very much like to work for your company.") The statement of qualifications lists briefly the student's pertinent job skills, and the closing tells employers that a resume is enclosed, references will be provided on request and an interview would be appreciated. The letter should also state when the applicant would be available for an interview or for employment (see the chapter appendix for a sample letter of application).

The letter of application should be prepared with a word processing software program and printed on a laser printer, using high-quality paper. The same or a very similar letter can be sent to several companies.

Work Samples

Most employers will want to see tangible evidence that an applicant can do the job. In some occupations, this means a pre-employment test and in others it means work samples. Although any applicant should be prepared to take a pre-employment test when seeking a job, in most interviews, good, representative work samples will be enough.

You should help your students prepare some type of portfolio or collection of their work that is representative of their skills in the vocational area and that they can present to employers. For example, a drafter should take prints of her or his drawings to an interview. Graphics and printing technicians could provide sample layout and production projects. Welders might bring samples of difficult welds on various types of metals; auto-body repairers could show before and after photographs of revitalized automobiles.

Job Application Forms

Many employers require a completed application form before they will consider a candidate for a job. The application form should be completed as carefully as the resume and letter of application. Give your students these suggestions for completing a job application form:

- Read the application form carefully and provide the exact information requested.
- Complete every item on the form. If for some reason an item on the application form does not apply to you, write "NA" (not applicable) in the space provided; if enough space is available, note why the item does not apply to you.
- Be prepared to provide exact personal information such as social security number, names of schools and exact dates of attendance, employment record (including beginning and ending date, names of employers, location, positions held and salary or wage) and personal references (including complete mailing addresses and telephone numbers). To ensure accuracy and cut down on the time needed to fill out the application, it helps to prepare 3" x 5" note cards containing such information.
- Complete the form as neatly as possible. Use black ink and print all information legibly.

Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation can be the most important component of student's employment package. A letter from the student's teacher explaining openly and honestly his or her strong points, weak points, skills and potential can make the difference in whether or not a student gets a good job.

An even more effective letter is one that comes from a past employer, especially an employer within the field the applicant is trying to enter. However, even if the employer's letter of recommendation is for work performed in a totally unrelated field, it can still show that the student has employability skills essential in any job, such as punctuality and dependability.

Students should secure permission from at least three individuals to use them as references, and determine if they are willing to provide a letter of recommendation. One advantage of using a placement center is that an applicant's references each need only write one letter that is placed in the student's file and forwarded to different employers. Otherwise, people listed as references may have to send letters of recommendation to several employers.

CONTACTING EMPLOYERS

There are several different ways to contact a potential employer, and the best one to use depends on a number of variables, including whether the potential job is local or out of town; whether a job opening was announced or whether this is a blind inquiry; and whether the job-seeker is contacting a personnel officer or the person who would be his or her supervisor in the job.

Inquiries about jobs in the student's own community can be made over the telephone, by mail or in person. Requests for out-of-town positions are usually made by mail. Your students should be familiar with the proper use of all three methods of inquiry.

If a job-seeker is contacting a potential employer by telephone or in person, their attitude should be positive and confident—as if there is definitely a job available and they know they are qualified for it.

If inquiring by telephone for a job that has been advertised, the job-seeker should ask to speak to the contact listed in the ad, explain that they are a skilled worker qualified for the announced position, and ask politely for an interview. This last statement is key because the purpose of any type of inquiry is to arrange an interview.

When calling seeking a job with a company that has not advertised an opening, the job-seeker should approach the conversation differently. The first step is to determine the name of the person who hires people for the kind of job desired. For instance, a welder could call the company and ask for the name of the head of the welding shop. The job-seeker should then place a call to that person, state her or his qualifications and request an interview. If the person in charge of hiring says there are no jobs currently available, a job seeker can still politely request a personal (or "informational") interview, so that the company will be aware of his or her qualifications in case a position opens up in the future.

In-person inquiries are handled in much the same way as telephone inquiries, with a few exceptions. When inquiring in person, job seekers must dress very professionally, have copies of their resume available and, if possible, take along work samples.

Many potential employers will need to be contacted by mail, especially those out of the job-seeker's geographic area. Many job advertisements listed in the paper or elsewhere specify "no calls" and require all applicants to contact the company by mail. When applying for a job through the mail, the job-seeker should try to get the exact name of the individual who will be doing the hiring, then send that individual a complete employment package containing a letter of application, a well-written resume, a letter of recommendation from the vocational instructor and, when applicable, work samples.

INTERVIEWING

Although securing an interview is the goal of your students' job search activities, once an interview is scheduled, panic may set in. Your job is to help your students get past panic, prepare to do their best and give successful interviews.

Remind your students that job interviews are rarely easy for anyone, no matter how qualified. It's natural to get nervous and be afraid you won't do well. It may help to tell them that in addition to being evaluated by the interviewer, they are evaluating whether this job is right for them. An interview is not a test, but an opportunity for the job-seeker and employer to learn about each other and determine whether there is an appropriate match between the available job and the worker's skills and interests.

Go over with your students the basic steps they should take to prepare for the interview, including:

- Learn as much about the business and its products or services as possible.
- Find out how employees at this workplace dress and the working schedule of the business.
- Try to determine what the prevailing wage scale is for new employees in the given occupation or position.
- Compile a list of questions this particular company might ask, and practice answering these questions (with a friend or teacher if possible) until your answers sound natural and you feel more relaxed.

Your students can learn about a business and its products or services by securing information from the company itself, doing research at the library, contacting the Chamber of Commerce or interviewing people who work for the company. Talking to people who work there or, if possible, unobtrusively observing the business will provide information about appropriate dress and working schedules. Wage scales for certain occupations may or may not be available from the business, but the state employment office can provide students with a range of wage expectations.

You should also give your students tips on the logistics of interviewing and the best way to present themselves to give a good impression (see list of suggestions for a successful interview).

Most students will be afraid of interview questions, and you should help them know what kinds of questions to expect and prepare their answers. While employers vary in the questions they ask, most want to know what experiences an applicant has had, what education he or she

Suggestions for a Successful Interview

★ Make sure you and the employer agree on a set time for the interview, and that you **arrive on time** (or slightly early). Call if something happens to make you more than a few minutes late.

★ Treat all individuals you meet at the business with courtesy and respect.

★ Go alone to the interview.

★ Dress professionally and make sure you are well groomed. A good rule is to dress slightly more formally for an interview than you would for a work day on the job. Credentials mean little if you do not make a good impression.

★ Offer a firm handshake and remain standing until invited to sit down.

★ Be attentive and listen to what the interviewer is saying.

★ Talk clearly and directly to the interviewer and answer all questions factually and fully without wandering from the point.

★ Make an effort to stress the skills you have that would help the business meet its goals.

★ Acknowledge your weaknesses, but do not dwell on them.

★ Show clear interest in the employer, the business and the job itself.

★ Indicate your willingness to learn and improve on the job.

★ Close the interview by asking for permission to contact the employer to determine your possible employment status (unless the employer specifies when they will call you).

★ Once the interview is completed, leave promptly so as not to prolong the interview.

Interview Questions Students Should Practice Answering:

- What made you seek an interview with this business?
- What qualifications would make you valuable to our business?
- What type of position are you most interested in?
- Are you eager to learn? Do you learn quickly?
- Would you rather work alone or with others?
- What do people tend to criticize you for?
- What is your single greatest strength? Your greatest weakness?
- Why do you think you would be good at this job?
- What kind of boss have you liked best in the past? What kind have you liked least?
- What is the most difficult thing you have ever tackled or taken on? The most satisfying?
- What subjects did you like in school?
- What school activities did you participate in?
- How do you spend your spare time? What are your hobbies?
- What sort of progress in our company would seem normal to you?
- How does this position compare with others that you have applied or interviewed for?

has and where they received it, what their plans are for the future and how they plan on attaining their goals. The more thought students give to these questions, the easier it will be for them to provide impressive answers. Practicing giving answers to likely—and unlikely—interview questions will bolster your students' confidence and make them more poised during the interview (see list of possible questions).

Thank-you Letters

Make sure your students know it's important to send a thank-you letter to the person who interviewed them, as a follow-up to the interview. The thank-you letter serves three purposes: it thanks the person for her or his time and consideration; it makes a good impression of the student as a polite person; and it reinforces the student's interest in the position. A thank-you letter should be short and to the point (see the sample letter in the chapter appendix).

When one of your students has an unsuccessful interview, you can help him or her analyze the experience, learn from it and plan how to do better next time. It's important that your students understand that they won't be hired for every position for which they apply, even if they gave a good interview. There are usually many applicants for each position, and an employer may select an individual they believe is a better match for the job. Help students get past a rejection and prepare to do their best at the next interview.

Your students also need to know they may have to be ready to accept something less than the perfect job in order to get a foothold, especially with a good employer. Most people have to perform work that has its menial, tedious and unattractive aspects—at least initially—so that they can show their potential. Responsible, well-paying jobs are obtained by building on a record of sound performance on lesser jobs.

SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Students should also be aware that they have two choices: they can go to work for someone else, or they can start a business of their own. The second choice is much harder than the first, especially when one is just starting out.

Each year, about 500,000 people in the United States go into business on their own. Half of these new businesses fail within two years; but more than 8 million people who operate their own businesses are successful. They have learned, by experience, education or both, how to create products and services that people need and how to bring these products and services to market with the least risk.

Consider teaching a unit on entrepreneurship as a career option. There are many resources you can use and direct interested students to, including:

- **Small Business Administration** (409 3rd Street, SW, Washington, DC 20416, 202-205-6600). The SBA has an office in every state that advises and provides resources to people interested in starting a business
- **Service Corps of Retired Executives** (409 3rd Street, SW, 4th Floor, Washington DC 20024, 800-634-0245), an organization of retired businesspeople with chapters around the country. SCRE members will speak to groups about going into business or help fledgling entrepreneurs get started.
- **Entrepreneurship Consortium at the Center for Employment and Training** (Ohio State University, 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210, 614-292-4353).

HOLDING A JOB

All vocational teachers must teach job retention skills, for learning how to hold a good job is your students' first step toward advancement. Job-holding skills are general skills that are valuable within all occupational areas. They include such intangibles as punctuality, dependability, loyalty and personality.

These traits fall into the habitual rather than intellectual domain of learning, and cannot be taught in the same way as skills and knowledge. The most effective way to teach job-holding skills is by example and discussion, and the best way for students to form positive job-holding skills is by habit.

Studies of the workplace have found that lack of ability to do the job is the cause of only about 15 percent of all job dismissals. Among the common reasons given by employers for firing an employee are: too frequent absence from work, habitual lateness, making trouble among fellow workers, dishonesty, unreliability and loafing. These bad habits may have been acquired by unsuccessful workers earlier in life.

The vocational teacher who expects her or his students to behave, relate, perform and dress in class as they will on an actual job is helping them develop proper work habits. By setting a good example, the instructor reinforces their learning even further.

Employability Skills

★ Be dependable: Employers count on workers to be there when they are supposed to be and to complete all projects on time and with high-quality results.

★ Be a learner: People do not leave a vocational program with a body of knowledge and skills that will never change, but with basic skills and knowledge that allow them to continue to learn and grow in their occupation.

★ Be a worker: Avoid joining the water cooler clique or the lounge set. Everyone needs a break, but make sure you are not the person the boss meets every time in the break room.

★ Be self-sufficient: There is nothing wrong with asking questions; in fact, in most industries it is encouraged as part of a team approach. But don't ask a question until you have made a persistent effort to determine the answer for yourself.

★ Constantly improve: Make it a habit to improve your knowledge and skills daily, and perform each task with a concerted effort to improve.

★ Be personable: Get along with other employees: a harmonious work environment adds to productivity and job satisfaction.

There are dozens of commercially produced videos and books teaching job-holding skills (consult the catalog of products available from the American Vocational Association). Most state curriculum guides include a unit on employability skills. You should also consider bringing in resource people from the community—such as someone from an employment agency—to discuss employability skills.

Employability skills you should help your students develop are described in the box above.

Learning on the Job

You must stress to your students that they will need to continue learning on the job. There is no occupation in which practices, procedures and technologies are static. New equipment, new techniques, new procedures and new knowledge come about on an almost daily basis in today's job world, and to keep up, your students must acquire the skills to be lifelong learners.

Your classroom environment and teaching processes can show how to continue learning on a lifelong basis. Presenting students with new and different projects or problems will cause them to think and perform beyond the realm of their normal, everyday learning assignments. For example, after helping your students develop a certain amount of knowledge and some basic skills, present them with a problem that has not yet been covered. Tell them they may discuss the problem among themselves and use any reference sources available to come up with a solution. Such activities will prepare students for what they can expect to confront on the job and will help them become independent problem solvers.

Advancing on the Job

Every occupation has a normal flow of advancement. As a worker's knowledge and skills grow, so will his or her responsibilities and wages. A common pattern for graduates of vocational programs is to begin as an entry-level employee, then advance upward to a supervisory position and finally, in some cases, to administration or management.

To move from entry-level to a higher level in an organization may take a lifetime for some and a short time for others, depending on the employee's performance on the job and other variables. Talk to your students about the normal steps through which they might advance as workers, the kind of responsibility inherent in each step and the amount of education and experience they can expect to need at each level so they can set realistic goals for themselves. You should help your students realize that employability skills and a willingness to continually learn are prerequisites for advancing in their field.

EMPLOYER-BASED EDUCATION

With the skills and knowledge necessary to perform today's jobs rapidly changing, more and more companies are allocating resources for education and training for employees. Your students should realize that they will need to be open to—and to seek—opportunities for additional training on the job in order to avoid becoming obsolete and to advance.

Employer-based education and training programs vary from company to company. Smaller firms may simply arrange an informal apprenticeship with a more experienced worker; larger organizations may have formal training programs lasting many months and using the latest teaching techniques and equipment. Many companies have tuition-aid programs to help employees further their education. As workers, your students should be aware of these programs and of available courses at local schools so they can further their education.

As a vocational teacher who cares about your students, you need to develop a comprehensive system for helping students find—and hold onto—their place in the work world after graduation. Your responsibility goes beyond helping each student find a job to teaching students how to get the kind of jobs they want themselves, and how to develop the qualities that will make them effective learners and workers for life.

APPENDIX

Sample Resume for Student With Related Experience

JOJUANA SMITH
123 Main Street
Anyplace, USA 12345
(123) 456-7890 (home)
(123) 567-8901 (work)

CAREER OBJECTIVE: To continue my career in structural drafting and advance to checker and then chief drafter

EDUCATION: A.S. Degree
Okaloosa-Walton Junior College, 1994

My training at OWJC covered five drafting fields, with specialized in-depth study in structural drafting. Training emphasized engineering and shop drawings in the areas of precast/prestressed steel, poured-in-place concrete and wood.

EXPERIENCE:

January, 1994 to present — **Southern Prestressed Concrete Company,** Anyplace, USA

Prepare shop drawings that include framing plans, sections, connection details, fabrication details and bills of material for large precast/prestressed structures.

May, 1990 - December, 1994 — **Tri-City Design,** Anyplace, USA

Prepared architectural and structural plans for residential and light commercial buildings.

January, 1988 - April 1990 — **Diversified Technical Services,** Anyplace, USA

Prepared architectural and structural plans for residential and commercial buildings.

HOBBIES: Reading and gardening

REFERENCES: Available on request

APPENDIX

Sample Resume for Student Without Related Experience

ROBERT GLENN
321 South Main Street
Apartment #1
Anyplace, USA 12345
(123) 666-6666

CAREER OBJECTIVE: To begin my career as a heating, ventilation and air conditioning drafter and advance to a position of HVAC designer

EDUCATION: **Okaloosa-Walton Junior College,** Anyplace, USA

1992 - 1994 Completed all the drafting and design courses required for an Associate of Science Degree. Lack twelve hours of general education courses for the degree. My drafting and design courses covered several areas, with an in-depth specialized study of HVAC drafting.

1988 - 1992 **Crestview High School,** Anyplace, USA

High School diploma with a vocational seal in technology

EXPERIENCE:

1991 to
to present **Anybody's Foot,** Northside Mall, Anyplace, USA

I have been employed as a salesperson for the past three years and used the income from this job to pay for my education.

AWARDS: I took First Place in the Georgia VICA Drafting Contest, and represented the state at the national VICA conference in San Diego.

HOBBIES: Fishing and travel

REFERENCES: Available on request

APPENDIX

Sample Letter of Application

123 Main Street
Anyplace, USA 12345
January 1, 1995

Mr. Jason Taylor
Chief Drafter
ABC Precast Concrete, Inc.
789 Broad Street
Anyplace, USA 12345

Dear Mr. Taylor:

Please consider me an applicant for the position of structural drafter that you posted with the placement center at Okaloosa-Walton Junior College. I am a structural drafter with an Associate Degree in Drafting from OWJC, and have specialized training in precast concrete. My skills include preparation of complete framing plans, sections, connection details, fabrication details and bills of material.

I am very interested in this position because of the increased responsibility the position would offer me. Enclosed you will find a resume, a letter of recommendation from my drafting instructor at OWJC, and a sample of one of my latest drawings.

I would be happy to provide references and additional samples of my work on request. I hope to be able to discuss my qualifications further with you. Please call me at (123) 456-7890 to arrange an interview. Thank you for considering my application and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jojuana Smith

Enclosures: Resume
Letter of Recommendation
Drawing

APPENDIX

Sample Thank-You Letter

123 Main Street
Anyplace, USA 12345
January 11, 1995

Mr. Jason Taylor
Chief Drafter
ABC Precast Concrete, Inc.
789 Broad Street
Anyplace, USA 12345

Dear Mr. Taylor:

I would like to thank you for the time you spent with me yesterday discussing the structural drafter position available at ABC Precast Concrete. I learned a great deal about your company, and I feel that my skills and experience would be an asset to the company.

I am very interested in the position and in becoming part of the team at ABC Precast Concrete. If you should need any additional information, please feel free to contact me or my references.

Again, thank you for your time and interest in me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jojuana Smith

Chapter 7

Creating a School and Community Relations Program

Designing a plan for school and community relations is an essential but often overlooked part of the vocational teacher's responsibility. In the face of declining enrollments, rising costs and inadequate budgets, vocational instructors need to constantly interpret and reinterpret their vocational program to the public. To do so, you will need some savvy with public relations and promotional activities.

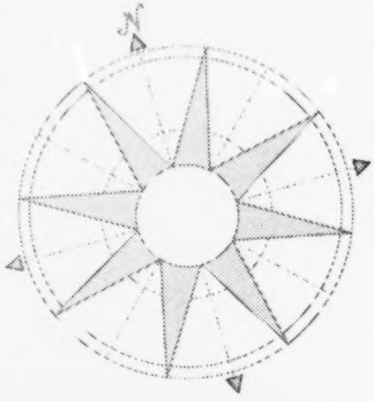
The success of vocational programs depends on their ability to attract students and gain funding. The attitudes and actions of people outside the program are critical to meeting both goals. School personnel, parents and potential students must become aware of the benefits of the vocational program if enrollment levels are to be maintained or increased. Community leaders, legislators and the "lay public" must see the value of vocational education—and your specific vocational program—if adequate funding is to be achieved.

As a teacher, you will not usually be responsible for an institution's entire school and community relations program. However, you should develop a plan for keeping the public informed about your school's program and its activities. Your school and community relations plan developed by the individual vocational teacher should be integrated with the institution's master plan and activities.

PLANNING A PROGRAM

Importance of Planning

One key to a successful school and community relations program is planning in advance the specific actions to take and the timing of each action. Advance planning and the development of a schedule makes for a well-balanced and continuous community relations program. Planning will help you keep track of the resources available for community relations and assures that the vocational program is always in the public eye through frequent contacts with key audiences. As



dates for various groups to be contacted are reached on the schedule, the plan indicates the action to be taken and how the action will coordinate with past or future actions.

You should coordinate your plan with the flow of events during the school year or in your community. Take into account when students and colleagues are likely to be preoccupied by events like finals or registration. Consider what events that bring the school or community together might be a good opportunity for showcasing your program. You may want to consider planning activities and events that highlight your program during Vocational Education Week (traditionally the second full week in February). While it may not function perfectly, a planned approach is vastly superior to the trial and error strategy many vocational instructors and institutions use for community relations.

Objectives of Your Plan

A well-conceived and carefully written school and community relations plan for a vocational program should:

- provide each interested individual and organization within the school or community the information needed to form a sound judgment about the vocational program.
- describe all the activities that will be part of the plan and indicate when each activity will be completed. The timing of activities is critical.

RECRUITMENT IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

As a rule, students volunteer to enroll in a vocational program; no one is required to sign up. Vocational teachers must therefore reach out to interest students in the program if there are to be enough students enrolled to maintain it.

A robust enrollment in vocational programs is crucial for several reasons, beyond the obvious one that in order to teach an instructor must have students. One reason is that the tools, equipment, supplies and machines needed to support vocational instruction make it expensive to conduct. Enrollments must be high enough to justify this cost.

Another reason—funding—has emerged in recent years as the most important. In every state and district, funding for vocational programs is tied either directly or indirectly to enrollments. Sustained enrollments mean continued or increased funding, while low or non-existent enrollment means less or no funding. This reality has brought a new term into the vocabulary of vocational education: recruitment.

Recruitment has emerged as one of the vocational instructor's most important responsibilities. Recruitment in vocational education can be broken down into the tasks of:

- identifying target audiences
- developing strategies for reaching those audiences
- gathering materials and resources to implement those strategies.

As part of school and community relations, you should establish a comprehensive recruiting plan based on the above three elements.

First, you will need to identify the many audiences that should be addressed, including students, counselors, parents, administrators, faculty, school board members and the business community. You must then outline strategies for reaching each audience and develop materials and resources to carry out the plan. A well-thought-out plan will ensure consistent enrollments of quality people who are likely to benefit from the vocational program. The Individualized Recruiting Plan in the chapter appendix provides more detailed suggestions.

Recruiting Contacts: Fellow Educators

Every vocational instructor should make contact with institutions and individuals that may help lead them to students who may be interested in the vocational program. For example, postsecondary vocational instructors should make contact with high school counselors, occupational specialists and teachers in specialized areas. Secondary vocational teachers should make contact with middle school (or junior high) and lower level secondary (9th and 10th grade) teachers.

Every year, new groups of students advance to a higher grade, and as they reach these higher grade levels, most begin to look for career guidance. Vocational instructors who have made a point of nurturing contacts with colleagues will find these contacts pay off in referrals of students to their program. Developing positive relationships takes time and effort, but is well worth it.

Establishing contacts involves more than stopping by and introducing yourself. Gaining the confidence of potential contacts is a two-step process, and keeping their confidence is an ongoing process.

The first and most critical step is to make sure that your vocational program is of high quality. If your program is not in good shape before you start making contacts, then all future recruiting efforts will fail. Don't try to sell your program until you can offer reasonable assurances of positive results.

The second step in the process is to sell yourself and the vocational program to potential contacts. A "soft sell" approach is best. When meeting with potential contacts, base your approach on a concern for helping students. Show documentation of your success in doing so in the past and the probability of continued success. Explain your own credentials, outline the curriculum of your program, offer to conduct tours of your facility, and display follow-up data on graduates of the program. If your program is new, you will need to demonstrate that it has a realistic potential for training students well and placing them in jobs.

Through contacts with fellow educators, you may also be invited to speak to groups of students about your vocational program, such as at school assemblies. In speaking to students, make optimum use of eye-catching visual aids like posters, slides, videotapes and charts displaying facts about your vocational program. Data on course requirements, placement information, cost factors, and time figures should all be included in the presentation. The theme of any presentation to potential students should be, "You can benefit from this vocational program and this is why."

Additional strategies for developing a positive relationship with potential contacts are:

- Provide a supply of printed materials about the vocational program that can be shared with students.
- Offer to be a guest speaker in classes or on sponsored career days.
- Invite teachers and students to use your vocational program as a field trip source.
- Solicit input from your contacts before you make any major changes in the vocational program that may affect their students.
- Keep your contacts informed about any institution changes that might affect their students—such as class schedules, entrance requirements or curriculum.

Parents

A recruiting program that does not include parents as key contacts is not complete. Parents are probably the single most important contacts to be developed. Countless sociological and psychological studies have shown that parents have a profound effect on their children's career choices, both directly through encouragement and indirectly through social status and educational level. While students may not always pursue the educational course that their parents recommend, they will often avoid educational programs of which their parents disapprove. Thus parents can be a deterrent to students entering vocational programs if they do not view such programs favorably.

Most students begin to manifest an interest in career exploration during the middle school (or junior high) years. This is the ideal time for secondary vocational instructors to develop contacts with parents.

An effective way to reach a large number of parents at one time is to speak at local PTA meetings at the middle school. Parents who become involved in the PTA are very interested in the education and career plans of their children. By meeting with parents and convincing them of the quality of your vocational program, you can develop a built-in clientele of matriculating students.

Civic, Church and Social Groups

Civic, church and social groups—such as Rotary Club, League of Women Voters, Lion's Club, Kiwanis Club, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Masons, Jaycees and many others—contain two important groups of contacts: community leaders and parents. The local Chamber of Commerce in most communities has a comprehensive list of all civic, church and social groups in their area. Such groups meet on a regular basis and are frequently in need of guest speakers.

To get speaking engagements, mail a brief abstract of your topic and a personal vita (resume) to presidents of the various clubs along with an offer to attend one of their meetings. When speaking to civic, church, social, business, industrial or educational groups the idea is to "sell" yourself and instill in listeners the idea that you are the person to contact if a question or interest arises concerning the vocational program. It's a good idea to develop one or two interesting talks on topics that relate either directly or indirectly to vocational education. Once developed, the same speech can be presented to each of the groups.

Specialized Recruiting Contacts

Postsecondary vocational instructors can establish vital recruiting contacts with local and state agencies that help people get jobs, such as vocational rehabilitation offices and JTPA councils. When you meet with contact persons in these various agencies, they will want to know specifically how your program can help their clients, and they will expect you to document all your claims. You should have available a one-page summary of the pertinent facts about your vocational program, including course requirements, cost data, expected employment and salary potential after graduation, and placement statistics.

Once an agency contact's confidence in you has been established, it will be maintained only by producing the promised results. Provide periodic reports of progress being made by clients they have placed in your program. Follow-up data on clients who graduate will strengthen your relationship with the agency.

Vocational Rehabilitation Offices. Most cities have a local branch of the State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and many also have private vocational rehabilitation centers. These agencies work to increase the independence of people who have become disabled due to injury, illness or accident. Since a major part of this goal is to help people find work, and since people with a disability may require training in a new career field, these offices can be good recruiting contacts.

Before making contact with rehabilitation personnel, examine your vocational program and determine what physical capabilities are required to practice the occupations for which you prepare people. Then meet with counselors in the rehabilitation office to determine which of their clients might be suited for your vocational program.

JTPA Councils. The JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act) is intended to help poor and unemployed people get skills training so they can become participating members of the workforce. Funds granted under the act can be used for such things as skills training, remedial education, advanced career training, cooperative education, upgrading and retraining, and vocational exploration. Clearly JTPA funds can be used to help unskilled people finance a vocational education.

At the center of the JTPA's delivery system are two councils: the State Job Training Coordinating Council and the local Private Industry Council (PIC). People serving on these councils, particularly the local PIC, can be productive recruiting contacts for vocational instructors.

Because the emphasis of the JTPA legislation is on state and local control, the Private Industry Council in any community might be composed of the board of county commissioners or the Chamber of Commerce. You should identify what group constitutes the PIC in your community, get to know members of the council, and let them know how your program can serve people in the community.

Military Installations. Vocational instructors located near a military installation should establish a working relationship with military personnel in charge of educational programs. Most military installations have an education office that encourages active duty personnel to take advantage of educational opportunities in the community, often providing financial assistance.

You should familiarize yourself with the government assistance programs available to help military personnel pay for off-duty education, such as the GI Bill and the tuition assistance program (the tuition assistance program is more commonly used by active duty personnel).

Correctional Facilities. Correctional facilities, especially those housing minimum security offenders serving time for non-violent crimes, are another possible recruiting source. Correctional facilities are not usually sources of large numbers of students, but they can be an integral part of an overall recruiting effort. (The chief administrative officer of the correctional facility is usually the person to deal with.) Beyond providing students for the vocational program, correctional facilities offer vocational teachers an opportunity to help people in trouble find new direction in their lives.

State Employment Offices. State employment offices are mainly responsible for matching unemployed people with jobs, not helping them find vocational training. However, if properly approached, employment office personnel can be valuable recruiting contacts. Most clients at state employment offices share two traits that hinder their chances of getting a job: lack of a salable job skill and lack of experience. State employment counselors who are aware of a particular vocational program can recommend it to their clients as a first step in solving their unemployment dilemma.

VOCATIONAL PROGRAM PUBLICITY

Your vocational program provides a crucial service to your community. Yet too often vocational programs are invisible to all but the students, teachers, employers and parents directly involved. You need to help your entire community see and understand the worth of your program.

As a teacher, you have access to many media for publicizing your program, including print (newspapers, magazines, brochures and newsletters) and broadcast media (radio and television). In addition, vocational teachers can publicize their program through exhibits and open houses and through letters, telephone calls and invitations to the school to key people.

Keep in mind Vocational Education Week in mid-February as a time to bring your program into the public eye through open houses, exhibits and other events or news stories and radio announcements. The American Vocational Association has available many products—from informative brochures to posters to giveaways like keychains and pencils—to help you spread the word about vocational education. (See chapter appendix for more ideas on resources.)

Print Media

Newspapers are still the main way of distributing news and opinions to large groups of people. Newspapers are responsible for printing the news, and vocational instructors should be responsible for getting the news about their vocational program to the press in such form that the newspaper will print it.

Consider all your local newspapers as outlets for publicity: not just the metropolitan and suburban dailies, but also their special sections dealing with specific neighborhoods, weekly community newspapers and free shoppers' newspapers that carry some news with a large amount of advertising.

Newspapers are always looking for human interest stories. Some possible events worthy of a news story might include:

- awards your program is giving out—or awards it has received
- community service projects involving students
- special programs or events
- visiting guest speakers or celebrities
- local events related to vocational training, such as the opening of a new plant or a new apprenticeship program

- local contests related to vocational education.

To ensure coverage of your event, either call or write the editor (or section editor) detailing your story, or forward a press release or fact sheet (refer to the chapter appendix for information on how to write a press release).

Many newspapers accept photographs, while others prefer to take their own. Consult with the newspaper before you go to the expense of having photographs taken.

Another print media that should not be overlooked is the school or institution's student newspaper. Ask the paper to cover special events such as vocational student organization awards and conferences. Or provide, as the basis for an article, information about jobs and careers, including salary ranges and career ladders, for which your vocational program prepares people.

Placing an advertisement in a newspaper, journal or magazine can be a relatively inexpensive and effective means of reaching your target audiences. Most print media that accept advertising produce a rate card itemizing their prices for advertising, their circulation base and audience demographics, and their frequency of publication. Make sure the media you select for your advertisement have a high readership of the audience you wish to reach. Newspapers, journals or magazines sometimes print an ad free as a public service.

Broadcast Media

Radio and television can reach a large audience, but there are some limitations, such as the lack of feedback because all communication is one way.

Radio stations broadcast a certain number of hours of programs "in the public interest." You can request some of this time for your vocational program. In addition, you can get free radio time through news coverage on local newscasts, spot announcements and public service programs that can take the form of speeches, discussions or interviews.

Like radio, television stations give time to public service programs and may be willing to help you plan and produce telecasts of your vocational program. If your community has an educational television station, it must function on a non-profit basis and make its facilities available to educational agencies in the broadcast area.

News Items. Local radio and television stations are usually interested in airing community interest items during their news broadcasts and are an effective publicity outlet for your vocational program.

Spot Announcements. A "spot" announcement is a brief, succinct statement about an event or a short appeal for some type of action. You may be able to have your spot aired once as a free public service announcement, or buy time and have a short message broadcast many times. Radio and television spots may be 15, 30, or 60 seconds in length. You can either supply the radio or television station manager with a script of the spot announcement and have a local media personality read the script, or you can pre-record the announcement and provide a tape. Television spots will have to be accompanied by a visual presentation, such as a photograph, slide or piece of artwork. In many instances, the local television station can help you meet this requirement.

Most radio and television stations schedule, as part of their regular programming, personal interviews, round-table discussions and various other types of "live" programs concerning events of general interest to the public. You may be able to arrange to have your vocational program or vocational student organization activities be the focus of such a program, or have someone from your program be a guest on a live show.

Arrangements for a guest appearance on radio or television should be made four to six weeks in advance with the program manager or public services director. If the station representative is interested in your proposal for a show or an appearance, send a follow-up letter that specifies the "who, what, when, and where" and a list of suggested questions an interviewer might ask. Many radio and television stations request an outline of the subject to be discussed and a brief biography of the individual(s) who will be interviewed.

Brochures

One of the best ways to inform the public about your vocational program is through a brochure or flyer. Brochures can be produced at a relatively low cost and are efficient because they can be targeted for a specific audience, such as students, employers or parents. In many institutions, brochures can be produced and printed by the school's graphics arts program.

The copy (the written words) for a brochure should be clear, concise, accurate and to the point. Before writing the copy, the vocational instructor should:

- determine whom the brochure is designed to reach
- know the prospective readers' interests and desires so that the copy will appeal to them
- decide on a theme or idea to create interest.

Photographs, illustrations and an attractive design add impact to a brochure. Copy and art should be combined to present a unified impression. Use the expertise in your institution's graphic arts program, if possible. Or enlist help from businesses in the community with whom you have formed partnerships.

Newsletters

A newsletter filled with relevant information pertaining to the vocational program is a good way of communicating with various audiences. The newsletter could be distributed monthly, bimonthly or quarterly and could feature coverage of such topics as: occupational statistics on positions for which the vocational program provides training, a list of part-time jobs and contacts in the community and interviews with graduates of the program about the skills they developed and their current employment situation. The possibilities for feature articles are numerous. Commercially available computer software can give the newsletter a professional look and is relatively easy to use.

Posters

Professional-looking, printed posters can be used in a variety of ways to keep audiences aware of the vocational program. Put posters in locations where they will be highly visible, such as in classroom windows, bulletin boards, in the guidance/career office, and in businesses within the community.

Posters can be used to (among other things):

- advertise courses being offered by the vocational program
- feature students who have obtained good jobs as a result of the vocational program
- publicize special events of the vocational program or vocational student organization
- explain the vocational program concept and show students the sequence of courses they would follow to complete a vocational program.

Recruiting posters strategically placed through the school and community can spark an initial interest in vocational education or catch students who may already be interested by presenting specifics about your program and who to call for further information.

Exhibits

Exhibits—set up within the school, community, or at activities sponsored by business and industry or professional organizations—can give students, other school staff and the general public a better understanding of the work being done in the vocational program.

An effective display could consist of a single panel with photographs, captions and text, or a booth with students demonstrating the skills they have learned in the vocational program. Each exhibit should be designed for a specific purpose, with a special appeal to the group that will view it.

Open Houses and Career Fairs

An open house is an opportunity for the public to come to your vocational program, tour the facilities, view demonstrations of what students are learning and discuss program offerings with students, teachers, and administrators.

Career fairs—in which potential employers come to the facility and provide students information about job opportunities with their firms—also give the school a chance to educate employers about the vocational programs it offers and the kinds of students that graduate each year.

Personal Contacts

Two of the most effective recruiting tools available are the personal letter and telephone call. No recruiting strategy can compare to a letter addressed specifically to an individual. Being singled out for personal attention is enjoyed by almost everyone and nothing does this better than a letter or telephone call.

Obtaining names of individuals to contact is the only problem with this method. Because of state and federal legislation concerning privacy, schools cannot provide mailing lists of students. But the vocational instructor should take every opportunity to solicit names of individuals, along with addresses and telephone numbers, who may want information about the vocational program. Always have a sign-up sheet for interested people at open houses and career fairs. A personal letter with appropriate information about the vocational program should be forwarded and then followed up with a telephone call to see if the individual has any additional questions.

Publicizing your vocational program and recruiting students is a challenging, time-consuming task—but one that will bring rich rewards for your program, your students and your own professional life.

APPENDIX

Individualized Recruiting Plan

Objectives:
1. Identify recruitment needs
2. Identify target audience
3. Develop strategies
4. Select specific plan to meet need
5. Create materials to implement plan

Recruitment strategies needed for:

___ Students
___ Parents
___ Administrators
___ Counselors
___ Business Community
___ Other: ________________

Selected strategies for target audience:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Steps required to implement each strategy:

Step	Timeline	Need Assistance From
____________________	____________________	____________________
____________________	____________________	____________________
____________________	____________________	____________________

Results:

Changes Needed:

APPENDIX

Writing a Press Release

A press release is a short, factual description, written for the media, of an event, a subject or an issue. Try to limit your press release to one page. Use active words and keep sentences as short as possible. Points to keep in mind when writing a press release are:

- At the top of the page, give your name, school name, address, telephone number and the date of the release. Write a headline for your story. Type your story double-spaced, with wide margins. When you reach the bottom of one page and have more coming, write "MORE" at the bottom of the page. At the top of each subsequent page, put the page number and several words from the headline to help an editor reassemble the story in case the pages get separated.
- Write to the level of the audience you want to address. Consider demographics, such as age and income.
- Write an outline of the points you want to make in your press release. Summarize the key facts of your story in your first paragraph, then develop aspects of the story in more detail in subsequent paragraphs. Move from the most important elements of the story down to the least important. If an editor has to cut, he or she should be able to do so by deleting paragraphs from the bottom without losing key facts.
- Use simple, familiar words and phrases anyone can understand. Don't be too technical.
- If possible, limit your sentences to 20 words or less. Express only one idea per paragraph. Introduce only one new idea per sentence. Introduce the most important idea in the first sentence of the first paragraph and group together ideas that are similar so the reader will get the message quickly.
- Make certain your press release contains the following basic information: WHO said or did something; WHAT was said or happened; WHEN it was said or happened; WHERE it was said or happened; and WHY it was said or happened.
- Wait a few days. If your story doesn't appear, call the editor and ask if it has been received at the newspaper. If the original release can't be located immediately, offer to deliver a duplicate copy.

APPENDIX

Resources for Promoting Your Program

The resources listed below and others that will help you promote your vocational program are available from the American Vocational Association, 1410 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, 800-826-9972. Consult the AVA catalog for a full listing of available resources.

Books and Planning Guides

- *Promotional Sample Kit:* a 24-page planning guide for promoting Vocational Education Week complete with camera-ready advertisements and sample news releases and public service announcements.
- *Marketing Vocational Education: A Handbook:* A guide for developing a marketing plan.
- *How Smart Schools Get and Keep Community Support:* Applies marketing principals used in business to promoting education.

Brochures

- *Eight Facts Every Parent Should Know About Vocational Education:* Gives parents reasons why they should have their children add vocational education courses to their high school curriculum.
- *You Can Be What You Want to Be:* Attractive tabloid to help teens focus on career interests and how they might relate to specific jobs. Includes career interest quizzes and information on educational options.
- *How to Prepare Your Teen For Work: Ten Tips For Parents:* Helps parents understand how they can help their children prepare for the world of work.

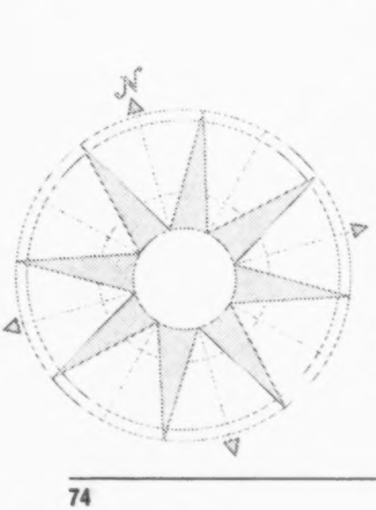
Chapter 8

Evaluating and Improving Your Program

Evaluation is the process by which you gather data about the quality and impact of your vocational program. It is a way to determine whether the goals you have established for your program and your students are being attained. As a teacher, you have an obligation to the public to ensure that your education programs deliver what is specified in your program goals. And when state and federal funds are expended, program evaluations are often required to show evidence of accomplishment and justify dollars spent.

TYPES OF EVALUATION

There are three main types of program evaluations. Many states conduct a state evaluation of a program or institution. Accreditation evaluations are undertaken by programs and institutions to receive certification or accreditation. A yearly local evaluation of a vocational program is also common practice.



State Evaluation

Many states conduct a vocational program evaluation every three to five years. The vocational instructor, in consultation with administrative personnel of the institution, usually completes a self-evaluation questionnaire prior to the date scheduled for an on-site evaluation by an evaluation team. The teacher prepares an evidence file, which contains supportive material for answers on the questionnaire.

Upon completion of the on-site visit, the evaluation team conducts an oral exit report with the administrative personnel of the institution. This report is followed up by a written report citing the strengths and weaknesses of the program and noting any problems with compliance regulations.

Accreditation Evaluation

Many institutions and vocational programs are required to conduct an evaluation periodically to attain or maintain accreditation. Generally, a team of evaluators reviews either the entire institution (institutional accreditation) or the program (specialized or program accreditation), analyzes its strengths and weaknesses and makes recommendations for improvement. The accreditation site-visit team usually includes members from the profession or occupational area, and they may use standards and criteria (and possibly instruments) for accreditation that have been developed by a professional association.

A formalized accreditation system usually includes the following: published standards; a self-study by the institution or vocational program instructor; a team of external assessors; a site-visit; a site-team report on the institution or program, usually including recommendations; a review of the report by some panel of professionals within the field; and a final report and accreditation decision by the accrediting body. If accreditation is granted, there is a specific period of time (usually every five to seven years) before another accrediting review is conducted.

Local Evaluation

In the absence of an external evaluation, a conscientious vocational teacher who wants to improve his or her vocational program should conduct a yearly evaluation of the program based on minimum standards and measures established for the program. In conducting such an evaluation, you may enlist the help of teacher educators from state universities or colleges, advisory committee members or professional colleagues in the field to appraise your program and give suggestions for improvement.

CONDUCTING A LOCAL EVALUATION

In conducting a local evaluation of your program, it is usually best to collect three general categories of data: demographic data, process data, and product data (summarized at left).

Demographic data include background about the students, instructor and school. At least three different kinds of demographic data should be collected:

Data to Collect in Local Evaluation

Demographic Data On:

- Students
- Instructors
- School

Process Data on:

- Teaching process
- Curriculum
- Resources

Products Data From:

- Student Follow-up Study
- Survey of Employers

- Student demographic data, including grade point average, courses taken, attendance, address and placement records
- Instructor demographic data, including years of occupational and teaching experience and educational preparation
- School demographic information, including courses offered, levels of enrollment in classes and average daily attendance.

Process data include information about the educational process students go through—such things as course outlines, lesson plans, graduation requirements, textbooks and other resources used. Process data can be obtained from the records available to you as a vocational teacher and should include at least information on the teaching process and procedures, the curriculum used, course competencies and learning resources and supplies.

Product data include information about the effects of the vocational program on its product—the student. This last type of data is the most important, since the focus of most program improvement efforts should be on the outcomes of the vocational program for its students.

Product data can be gathered from two sources:

- A student follow-up study, conducted approximately one and three years after students' departure from your program. Former stu-

Reasons for Conducting a Follow-Up Study

- to identify kinds of employment students have entered
- to learn how students have used their education
- to learn whether students are getting more education
- to track student mobility
- to see if you can help former students

dents are in a unique position to comment on how well the program prepared them to enter and advance in the workforce or further their education.

- A survey of employers who have hired graduates of the vocational program. Such employers are in a unique position to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the education students have received.

A STUDENT FOLLOW-UP STUDY

Why A Follow-Up Study?

A follow-up study is a procedure for collecting pertinent data from or about individuals who have had comparable experiences. "Follow-up" implies the collection of data about something that has already taken place. In evaluating your program, a follow-up study is an excellent way to get feedback from students on how well the vocational program prepared them—or failed to prepare them—for their future work or educational endeavors. Follow-up studies do not provide all the answers needed for evaluating a vocational program, but they are an important component of a larger evaluation. (See box at right for advantages of a follow-up study.)

Follow-up studies can help you answer many questions about your former students, including the number and kinds of employment (part-time or full-time) your students have entered and the extent to which they are making use of their education and training. You can also get an idea whether former students are staying in the area or moving around and whether they are taking advantage of postsecondary education or education and training sponsored by business and industry. A follow-up study also gives you a chance to find out if you or your vocational program can be of further help to students who have graduated.

Information obtained from follow-up studies has some limitations. In evaluating how much the program helped them, respondents may have a limited knowledge of alternatives. One important factor to keep in mind is that respondents will be reacting to the vocational program as they knew it. If changes have been made since the former students left the program, they may be unaware of them. Your interpretation of data and comments from students must take these changes into account.

Ways to Reach Students

Most follow-up studies use a mailed questionnaire to reach respondents. The problem of non-respondents, however, is a major shortcoming of this procedure. Research studies have revealed that students in the lower percentile of their class tend to return a lower percentage of questionnaires than do students in the top percentile.

If your evaluation effort is to be successful and valid, you must get feedback from all students whom the vocational program is designed to serve, not just the successful graduates. Therefore, it is very important that all former students be made to feel they are valuable members of the group.

One approach to conducting follow-up studies that has proven successful is the interview, conducted either in person or by phone. Personal interviews are probably most desirable; however, they can be very expensive and require a lot of time.

A telephone interview can be a good compromise. You are more limited than in a personal interview in the amount of information that can be obtained, but the telephone interview may be the only workable procedure for some segments of the population. Often, a combination of mail questionnaires and phone interviews with a sample of non-respondents works best.

Who to Contact

Students being surveyed should have been out of school a sufficient length of time to be able to reflect on the relevance and helpfulness of their previous educational experience. The vocational student who graduates in the spring of the school year should be surveyed during the early part of the following fall semester. This provides most graduates time to have established themselves in either employment or further education.

Remember, however, that the longer former students have been out of school, the greater problem they will have in separating the value of their formal education experience from the influence of other educational activities. Also, the longer they are away from school, the less valid their judgments about the current vocational program are likely to be.

Procedures for Conducting the Follow-Up

One procedure that is gaining popularity is to send a card or letter to the former student prior to mailing a follow-up questionnaire—to alert students that they will soon be receiving an important questionnaire and to urge them to complete and return it as soon as possible. Mailings should be done at two-week intervals (see box for suggested mailing plan).

The cover letter should be printed on institution letterhead and signed by the vocational instructor. It is harder to resist a letter that has been personally addressed and signed than it is to resist a greeting from a computer. A stamped, self-addressed envelope—bearing an address former students can easily identify—should always accompany the follow-up instrument and cover letter. The physical appearance of all materials should be of professional quality and designed to arouse interest.

Timing is important. Mailings are often slightly more effective if they arrive in the early part of the week, on Monday or Tuesday. Avoid periods of "stress" such as the end of school terms, vacation times or holidays.

Mailing Plan for Follow-up Study

✉ **First mailing** — "alert" card

✉ **Second mailing** — follow-up questionnaire, cover letter and stamped, self-addressed return envelope

✉ **Third mailing** — second follow-up questionnaire, second cover letter and stamped, self-addressed return envelope

(see sample mailings in chapter appendix)

When using a multiple mailing approach, it makes sense to use a different strategy on the first and second mailings. Some individuals are early-in-the-week performers, others late-in-the-week performers. If you tried to reach them early in the week on the first mailing, try for an end-of-the-week arrival on a subsequent mailing so the letter arrives on Friday or Saturday. Remind respondents of the date by which the questionnaire should be returned (it is usually best to give a two-week period for return).

Locating Former Students

One of the most difficult problems in conducting a follow-up study is locating former students. It helps to tell students in advance, while they are still in your program, that you will ask them to respond to a questionnaire at a later date. Before students leave your school, tell them they will be receiving a follow-up questionnaire in the mail during the fall. Discuss why this is being done and, if at all possible, review the questionnaire with students so they can raise any questions they may have.

There are a number of creative ways to secure the addresses of former students:

- writing "Please Forward" on announcements and questionnaires

- sending self-addressed change-of-address cards to parents/guardians of non-respondents so they can provide the current address
- checking the city directory at the public library
- checking area telephone directories or calling directory assistance
- asking for help from other students who are still in school.

Reporting Student Follow-Up Data

Reporting the data collected is important for good public relations and program visibility. Since the goal of most vocational programs is to help students attain competency for employment, the data collected should in some way reflect the following:

- Percentage of graduates available for employment
- Percentage of graduates employed in the career field for which they received vocational education
- Percentage of graduates employed in other fields
- Percentage of graduates pursuing further education.

Data may be reported for one year or any number of years. Immediate feedback from first-year graduates is very beneficial in determining the extent to which the program is meeting the needs of students. However, graduates in certain circumstances—such as those who start a family right away or who enter the military—may not reflect the benefits of the vocational program for three to five years. In reporting your data, try to prevent such individual situations from distorting the overall picture. You should never rely solely on follow-up studies as the way to evaluate your program. Always use some other data collection method or evaluation technique to complement your follow-up study.

The value of a good follow-up system is the follow-through action that results from interpreting and disseminating your data. People in positions to make changes in your program must know the results of the study.

CONDUCTING AN EMPLOYER SURVEY

An employer survey can be executed in a number of ways. The scope of the survey, the number of employers to be surveyed and the resources available will determine the best method to use. Your survey can accomplish several goals, including:

- **Assess the viability of competency lists.** You may want to use an employer survey to determine whether the list of competencies you require of your graduating students is appropriate for the jobs they will be entering.
- **Assess the performance of former students.** If you have already determined (by a previous survey or through your advisory committee) that your list of competencies is appropriate, your employer survey may focus on whether employees who graduated from your program actually possess those competencies. Competency can be measured by asking the employer to rate former students on a given list of skills. Another approach is to present a list of competencies, asking the employer to identify those that the former student is lacking. This assessment may also be applied to "general competencies," such as "ability to get along with individuals." A more detailed survey might focus on specific job competencies.
- **Get employer suggestions for improving your program.** In addition to assessing competency lists and rating the performance of employees, employers can make specific suggestions for how your vocational program can better prepare students for careers in an occupational area.
- **Give good public relations for your program.** Another benefit of an employer survey is improved public relations with local employers. Most employers are very willing to become involved in improving a local vocational program, and an employer survey is an excellent way to involve them and make them feel positive about your work. (See chapter appendix for a sample employer survey.)

Selecting Employers

One way to get names of employers is to include on the student follow-up questionnaire a space for the name and address of the student's employer and immediate supervisor. An employer survey can then be sent to the business and individual identified by the student. It is important to specify an individual name rather than simply sending the survey to the employing agency. A name personalizes the survey and helps ensure an adequate return.

Developing a Cover Letter

You will need to prepare a cover letter to accompany your mail survey. The letter should indicate the purposes of the survey, give some indication of how the results will be used, and in general attempt to establish rapport between your institution and the employer. It is often a good idea to involve the advisory committee in developing and sending the letter and questionnaire, at least by using letterhead of the advisory committee chairperson or adding his or her signature. (see Sample 4 in the chapter appendix). A stamped, self-addressed envelope should always accompany the survey.

Getting Help

Conducting a student follow-up study and an employer survey is a lot of work. Don't assume you have to do all the work yourself. You may be able to get your school's office staff to help with at least some of the administrative tasks involved. Or consider getting one of your school's business education classes to take on the administrative portion of the work as a learning project. Your advisory committee should be able to help, particularly with the employer survey, by deciding who to survey and helping you draft the survey and letters.

REPORTING EVALUATION DATA

Reporting the Employer Data

You will need to develop a plan for interpreting the information collected, including criteria for making interpretations. The goal of interpretation is to be able to analyze your data in such a way that you can make conclusions and recommendations—which can be used to improve your program by revising objectives, deleting or adding courses, revising sequencing and so on. Because the administration of your institution will need to make or approve certain changes, the information gleaned from the employer survey (as well as other demographic, process and product data) should be presented to administrators in a formal written report.

A written report of your overall local program evaluation will help you communicate how the evaluation was done and your findings. Your report should include an analysis of the information provided and recommendations for program improvement based on your analysis of the data.

You should also arrange to make an oral presentation to appropriate administrative personnel of key findings in your report and the changes they call for. Before the presentation, have the written report duplicated professionally, if possible with a well-designed and eye-appealing cover. Make copies for each administrator and anyone else who will attend the presentation.

In your presentation, use appropriate visual aids (such as overheads or slides) to highlight key points of the report. Use graphs and charts to present numerical data. Allow plenty of time for feedback and questions from your audience. Listen to their concerns, clarify misunderstandings and try to make it clear to them that the changes you are recommending are both necessary and feasible.

Developing an Action Plan

After the evaluation data has been collected, analyzed and reported, the next logical step is to develop an action plan for improving your program. Typically, program improvement is gradual. Since it is usually not feasible to make sweeping changes in a vocational program all at once, implement first only those immediate changes that will benefit students the most. Some changes may require additional resources (time, financial and personnel) and will have to be included in the institution's long-range strategic plan.

YOUR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Advisory committees play a vital role in the evaluation and improvement of a vocational education program. A vocational program advisory committee is usually a group of people in a community who represent the employment fields for which the program is preparing students, who have specialized knowledge regarding careers or job training and have an interest in the vocational program. The rationale behind advisory committees is simple: As technology continues to bring about changes in all occupational fields, those changes must be reflected in vocational programs that prepare people for jobs. Input from people working in the field is crucial to that process. Members of the advisory committee provide information on changes in skill requirements, equipment, facilities, economic patterns and job placement possibilities. The committee helps vocational schools update programs and plan and develop new programs—and can help in recruiting.

It should be noted that advisory committee activities are limited to suggestions, recommendations and assistance. They do not exercise administrative or faculty control of the program. As the name implies, the advisory committee exists to provide advice.

Each vocational program in an institution should have its own advisory committee, which must understand its specific purpose and be willing to fulfill its obligations. It is important to fully explain the purpose of an advisory committee to potential members before inviting them to participate.

Suggestions For Effective Advisory Committee Meetings

- The committee chair and vocational instructor should prepare for each meeting well in advance, developing the agenda and arranging for all logistics.
- Each meeting should not last more than two hours and should focus on particular content or issues.
- Hold each meeting in a comfortable location. Some meetings could be held away from the institution such as in a committee member's local business.
- Notify each committee member in writing of the meeting date and agenda. Call committee members two days prior to the meeting to remind them of the meeting.
- Prepare all necessary background materials for agenda items.

Steps in Organizing an Advisory Committee

Effective advisory committees are a result of careful planning. The following are basic steps for organizing an advisory committee:

Step One: **Obtain permission to organize.** Submit to your school administration a written request for authorization to organize an advisory committee. The request should be accompanied by statements of rationale, purpose and organizational procedures.

Step Two: **Select members.** With help from a school administrator, draw up a list of possible members for the advisory committee. Contact proposed members and determine their willingness to serve.

Your committee should include a cross-section of skilled workers, supervisors and management personnel from the occupational area. If there is an active employee organization in your community, select a member from the organization. Seven to ten is usually the best number of members.

Step Three: **Notify members of appointment.** People who have agreed to serve on the committee should be officially notified of their appointment. Send a letter of appointment from the school administrator that describes the importance of the committee and stresses the need for each member's active participation.

Step Four: **Orient members.** You and your school administration should give new members an orientation to their responsibilities, including a presentation about the vocational program, characteristics of graduates and current students and current issues within the program and the employment picture.

Suggested Activities for Advisory Committees

Employment and Training Activities

- Help identify new and emerging careers in the occupational field
- Plan, conduct and analyze surveys in the community
- Help identify training needs for specialized areas in the occupational field
- Help identify career and education opportunities for people with disabilities

Career Development Activities

- Provide information about all aspects of the industry
- Arrange field trips for students, guidance counselors and academic instructors
- Help develop and field test entry- and advanced-level tests of skills and knowledge
- Help determine standards for selecting students

Curriculum-Related Activities

- Help develop and review course content
- Evaluate proposals for curriculum patterns
- Help select texts and reference materials
- Donate or obtain gifts of trade journals and training materials
- Loan instructional aids and training films

Activities to Improve Facilities

- Evaluate layout of program facilities
- Help obtain equipment and supplies through loans and gifts
- Help develop specifications for equipment

Activities to Help Instructors

- Provide career experiences for vocational and academic teachers
- Provide money to help teachers participate in appropriate state and national conferences

Public Relations Activities

- Arrange for presentations on the vocational program to civic and business groups, or on television or radio
- Provide articles on the vocational program to appropriate trade journals

Evaluation Activities

- Help determine standards of evaluation for the program
- Analyze results of follow-up studies of vocational program graduates

Step Five: Elect officers. It is usually best to elect two officers for the committee: a chair and a vice-chair. The vocational instructor usually performs the role of secretary and serves as an ex-officio member of the committee.

Step Six: Plan a program of activities. Your advisory committee should develop an annual program of activities that includes a long-range plan as well as special issues to be considered during the current year (and possibly activities to undertake every year). The activities should then be incorporated into the agendas for each meeting (see suggested list of activities).

Step Seven: Plan and conduct meetings. The committee should meet at least four times during the year (if you have a full program of activities, you will have plenty to discuss at each meeting). The committee chair, with your help, should plan each meeting and establish meeting dates and handle all logistics for meetings (see suggestions for effective meetings).

Step Eight: Set up procedures for annual report. The advisory committee should be encouraged to present an annual report of its activities, concerns, evaluations and recommendations to the appropriate administrators of the institution. Such a report could take the form of a memo, a formal written report, or a discussion with administrators or the teacher.

RESULTS WORTH THE EFFORT

The hours you spend evaluating and improving your vocational program will pay off. Your reward will come through boosting your program's reputation and your reputation as a vocational educator, and most important through being able to provide a better program for your students.

APPENDIX

Sample 1: Alert Letter

(INSTITUTION LETTERHEAD)

Date

Name
Address
City, State, ZIP

Dear ______________:

In the near future, you will receive a questionnaire concerning your experiences since leaving our school. I would like to request your cooperation in completing and returning the questionnaire, which we have designed to help improve our vocational program for the future.

Your responses to the questions will be of tremendous help to us and to the students now enrolled in the program. Your answers will be kept in strictest confidence.

I look forward to receiving your response!

Sincerely,

Vocational Instructor

APPENDIX

Sample 2: Cover Letter

(INSTITUTION LETTERHEAD)

Date

Name
Address
City, State, ZIP

Dear ______________:

I am asking you, as a graduate of the vocational program at ______________________ (name of institution) to participate in an important study.

Each year the faculty and administration of _______________ (name of institution) asks our graduates to evaluate the vocational program. We are trying to determine the current status of our graduates and to get your feedback as to how we can make the vocational program better.

You can make a tremendous contribution to the improvement of the program by completing and returning the enclosed survey. The information you will supply will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Please take a few minutes to complete this form and return it to me in the stamped, pre-addressed envelope enclosed. Could I have your response back by __________ (insert return date)?

Thank you for your help. If I can be of any assistance to you, please feel free to call on me.

Sincerely,

Vocational Instructor

Enclosure: Follow-up Survey
Mailing Envelope

APPENDIX

Sample 3: Second Request Cover Letter

(INSTITUTION LETTERHEAD)

Date

Name
Address
City, State, ZIP

Dear _______________:

Two weeks ago we sent you a questionnaire about the vocational program at
__________________ (name of institution) asking for some information from you. Your experiences since completing the vocational program offer very valuable information to us as we seek to improve our program.

The response to our request for information from former students has been most gratifying. The return questionnaires are now being analyzed and in a few weeks I hope to have completed a report that will help us improve our program.

Could you please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire I sent you? I have enclosed another copy of the questionnaire for your convenience.

Please use the enclosed stamped, pre-addressed envelope to return the completed questionnaire today. Thank you for your cooperation!

Sincerely,

Vocational Instructor

Enclosure: Follow-up Survey
Mailing Envelope

APPENDIX

Sample 4: Employee Cover Letter

(INSTITUTION LETTERHEAD)

Date

Name of Individual
Business
Address
City, State, ZIP

Dear _____________:

Each year the faculty and administration of ______________ (name of institution) survey businesses who currently employ graduates of our vocational program. Our goal is to determine how successful our program is in preparing people for employemnt and to determine ways we can improve our program to make our graduates more competitive in today's labor market.

You have been identified as an employer of one of our former students. You can make a tremendous contribution to the future of our vocational program—and the preparation of local workers—simply by completing and returning the enclosed survey form.

The information you supply will be kept strictly confidential. Please take a few minutes to complete this form and return it to me in the stamped, pre-addressed envelope enclosed. Thank you very much for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Vocational Instructor

Enclosure: Employer Survey
Mailing Envelope

APPENDIX

Sample Employer Questionnaire

Name of Business: ______________________________

Address of Business: ______________________________

____

Name of individual completing the survey: ______________________________

Name of employee who is graduate of the vocational program: ______________________________

Directions: Please indicate your satisfaction with the employee named above as compared with other workers at the same point of entry. If the worker is the only person employed with your firm in that group, compare him or her with others who have worked in the same position. Place a "✓" in the space which best reflects your response to each item.

ITEM	Above Average	About Average	Below Average	N/A
The quality of the employee's work				
The quantity of the employee's work				
The productivity level of the employee				
The degree to which the employee possesses specific job-related knowledge and skills required on the job				
The degree to which the employee is able to operate the equipment used on the job				
The degree to which the employee possesses the basic reading, verbal and computational skills required on the job				
Cooperation with co-workers				
Compliance with company policies, rules, etc.				
The degree to which the employee has met your expectations				

Comments:

Major strengths of the employee:

____

Areas of needed improvement of the employee:

____

Recommendations for improvement of the graduate of the vocational program:

____

____

Please return this survey at your earliest convenience in the pre-addressed, postage paid envelope provided. Your assistance in this survey and improvement of our vocational program is greatly appreciated!

APPENDIX

Sample Student Follow-Up Questionnaire

Directions: Please complete all sections of this survey. When you have completed the survey return it in the enclosed return addressed, postage paid envelope. All responses are held in strict confidentiality.

Personal Data

Name: ______________________________

Mailing Address: ______________________________
____

Home Telephone: (   ) ______________________

Employment History

1. Are you currently employed: _____ Full-time (30 hours or more per week)
_____ Part-time (Under 30 hours per week)
_____ Not employed at the present time

2. If you are employed either part-time or full-time, please indicate the name and address of the firm and your position within the firm.

Name of firm you are presently working for: ______________________
Address: ______________________
Supervisor's Name: ______________________
Job position: ______________________

3. How satisfied are you with your current position?

_____ Very Satisfied _____ Satisfied _____ Not Satisfied

4. What is your pay scale (per week)?

_____ Under $200/week _____ $201-$300/week _____ Over $300/week

Education History

5. Are you currently attending a postsecondary institution (college or university, community college, technical institute, or private institution)?

_____ Full-Time Student _____ Part-Time Student _____ Not currently in school

APPENDIX

Sample Student Follow-Up Questionnaire Continued

6. If you are attending school either full- or part-time, please indicate the name of the postsecondary institution and your current major or emphasis area.

   Name of postsecondary institution: ______________________________
   Major or emphasis area: ______________________________

7. Please indicate the type of degree/diploma you expect to receive and your anticipated graduation date:

   ____ Certificate ____ 2-year Associate ____ 4-year Bachelors

   Expected date of graduation: ______________

Other Information:

8. If you are not either currently employed or attending school, please indicate your current status: ______________________________

9. What topics of the vocational program were the most beneficial to you?

   ____

10. What should be emphasized more or added to the vocational program curriculum (what was taught in the class)?

    ____

11. How has the vocational program/class or training helped you in either business, education, or personal use?

    ____

12. What part of the vocational program do you feel was not worthwhile or should be changed?

    ____

Other comments you wish to make: ______________________________

____

Thank you for your assistance! Please enclose this questionnaire in the self addressed, postage-paid envelope and mail today!

Chapter 9

Professional Development

While all vocational teachers must encourage their students to be lifelong learners, it is equally important that we remain lifelong learners ourselves.

Your success as a teacher depends on an ongoing dedication to quality education in general and, specifically, quality vocational education. You can live out this dedication by continually improving your teaching skills and deepening your knowledge of the vocational education field and your specific career area.

Professional development is also important for retaining your professional credentials. Most states require teachers to have their initial teaching certificate renewed every three to five years (also referred to as recertification). Recertification usually requires that you provide evidence of professional growth and development. The requirements and documentation needed for recertification vary from state to state, but generally participation in professional development activities and/or completion of college credit courses satisfies the renewal provisions.

You should be aware of the requirements for recertification in your state. Review these requirements with your state's certification office or local administrator.

IMPROVING TEACHING PRACTICES

At the heart of improving your teaching practices must be your belief that your most important role is to serve the needs of students. Several commitments flow from this belief, among them: to take responsibility for the success of your students; to prepare all your students for success; to set an example for your students; to be a good classroom manager; and to use a variety of instructional methods.

To make your teaching effective, you first need to understand the principles by which students learn. Consider each of the following principles that have been shown to hold true for learning,

Principles for Effective Teaching

- Students learn best when they are motivated
- Students need to apply what they have learned soon and often
- Students need to see the relevance of what they learn
- Learning activities should be sequential
- Learning takes place by doing

and use them to evaluate your own teaching methods:

- **Students learn best when they are motivated to learn.** In a vocational setting, this can be accomplished by showing students that what they learn will directly help them get better jobs, or by using classroom or VSO-related projects that require students to use what they learn to create something meaningful or receive a reward.
- **The sooner students use what they have learned, the better they will be able to remember it and use it again.** You should provide opportunities for students to immediately and frequently apply what you teach in the classroom or laboratory.
- **Students learn best when they see the usefulness of what they are learning.** You can help students realize the relevance of their efforts by relating the vocational and academic skills they are learning to those that are actually used on the job.
- **Learning must progress step by step.** You can facilitate better learning in your vocational program by planning organized, sequenced learning activities. Each successive activity should build on the learning that took place in the step preceding it.
- **Learning takes place by doing, especially in a vocational program.** Lectures, demonstrations and class discussions all can help students learn, but no real learning takes place until the student applies what is being learned.

Instructor Evaluation

To continually improve your teaching, you should develop a systematic procedure for examining your performance in the classroom. Many institutions have a formal evaluation system in which teachers are evaluated by the chairperson of the department or the local administrator. But if you are truly dedicated to quality teaching, you should also conduct anonymous student evaluations and a self-evaluation, which will provide important information you can use to improve your teaching, your students' learning and your vocational program.

The student evaluation form or checklist should cover at least two areas: the instructor and the methodology. A rating scale, perhaps from 1 to 5, on each of the items on the evaluation form gives students an opportunity to indicate their opinions on a continuum. You also should give all students an opportunity to offer open-ended comments, either complimentary or critical, as to what they liked best or least about the instructor or course. Ask outright for suggestions for change or improvement. A sample student evaluation form is provided in the chapter appendix.

It's also important to do a self-appraisal. One way to evaluate your own performance is to videotape and watch several classroom teaching sessions. Instructors seldom have the opportunity to see or hear themselves as their students do. As you watch a video of yourself teaching, put yourself in your students' place to critique how clear your explanations are, whether you were helpful when students had questions, and so on. You may want to use the evaluation form you give your students as a checklist for evaluating your teaching as reflected on the videotape.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Professional development activities include reading professional literature; joining key organizations; attending professional meetings and conferences, in-service or staff development activities; occupational updating; and taking classes, workshops or seminars at local colleges.

Such activities will help you keep current in the vocational field and broaden your knowledge.

Professional Literature

Regularly reading professional literature—both publications in the education/vocational education field and publications specific to your occupational area—will keep you up to date on current trends and developments affecting the profession. Publications can also provide models, ideas and resources for improving your vocational program and your own skills as a teacher. The chapter appendix contains a listing of selected professional journals.

Professional Organizations

Professional organizations define the criteria for admission into a profession, lead in research and work for the continued growth of the profession. Such organizations provide opportunities for leadership and responsibility within the field and can help broaden your perspective beyond the concerns of your local area.

The benefits of these organizations go far beyond the membership fees required. The key benefits include:

- Opportunity to attend or take a leadership role in conferences dealing with professional issues, practices and resources
- Information and reduced rates on professional publications and curriculum materials
- Opportunity for active professional leadership
- Opportunity to serve on committees and study groups
- The chance to be officially recognized for outstanding performance in your field
- Input into local, state, and national issues.
- Networking through the local affiliates.
- Public relations
- Legislative leadership and advocacy.

You should, at a minimum, be a member of the following organizations:

American Vocational Association (AVA). AVA is the largest professional association in the country for people involved in workforce education. The mission of AVA is "to provide educational leadership in developing a competitive workforce." To carry out this mission, AVA has committed itself to four broad purposes: providing professional development to its members; fostering excellence in vocational-technical education; advocating national public policy that benefits vocational-technical education; and marketing vocational-technical education.

AVA sponsors many professional activities, the most important being the annual AVA Convention held in December of each year. In addition to the convention, throughout the year AVA sponsors workshops in different areas of the country on topics relevant to workforce education, such as how to build a school-to-work system. These workshops are strategically located to be accessible to vocational teachers in all major regions of the country.

AVA also makes available to its members at reduced rates books, videotapes, software and other materials that can help you become a better teacher and carry out all responsibilities related to vocational teaching. AVA publishes an annual catalog of such products, some created specifically for vocational teachers' needs. Members receive the *Vocational Education Journal*, a magazine that includes many articles helpful to vocational teachers.

In addition, AVA actively represents the interests of vocational education to state and national officials who have policy-making power. AVA provides legislative updates to its members and every year sponsors a National Policy Seminar in Washington. The seminar provides cutting-edge information on how federal policy is affecting vocational-technical education and what you can do to help shape the direction of that policy.

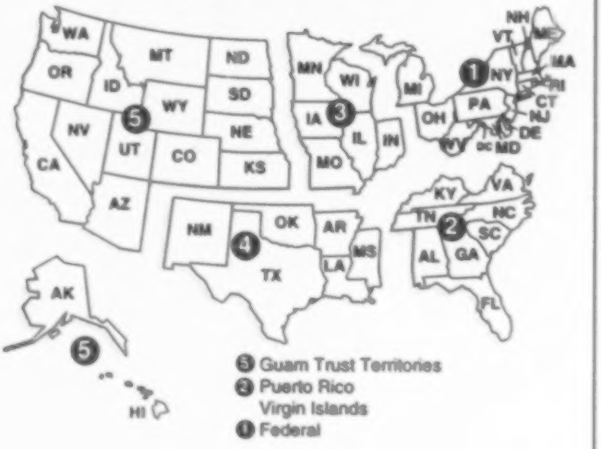
Membership in AVA permits you to become a member of any of the thirteen divisions of the organization that are established by program disciplines and professional positions in vocational education. In addition, AVA membership is divided into five geographical regions (see boxed listing of divisions and regions).

State Vocational Association. Each state has its own vocational education association, half of

Divisions of American Vocational Association

- Administration
- Agricultural Education
- Business Education
- Employment and Training
- Guidance
- Family and Consumer Science Education
- Health Occupations Education
- Marketing Education
- New and Related Services
- Special Needs
- Technical Education
- Technology Education
- Trade and Industrial Education

Regions of the AVA



which are affiliated with the American Vocational Association. Each state vocational association includes vocational teachers and administrators and speaks for vocational education at the state level.

Most state vocational associations sponsor an annual conference in which vocational teachers from across the state meet to keep up to date on current trends and practices within their teaching specialty. Activities throughout the year promote the interests of vocational education within the state. Information about each state's association can be obtained by contacting AVA's national headquarters or the state director of vocational education.

Vocational Area Organizations. Each area of vocational education has its own professional association. Most of these associations provide their members a professional journal or other publication, information on conferences, opportunities to serve, personal and professional recognition and affiliation with the "cutting edge" of the profession. Professional associations related to vocational subject areas are listed in the chapter appendix.

Professional Meetings and Conferences

Professional meetings and conferences—held at local, state, regional and national levels—are a vital source of information and give you an opportunity to learn from leaders in education, business and industry. They also give you a chance to meet other vocational teachers and professionals and exchange ideas, concerns, resources and solutions to problems. In addition, at most professional conferences, exhibitors from business and industry display the latest tools of the teaching profession, including new textbooks, computers and software, equipment and related materials.

Many professional conferences now provide pre- and post-conference sessions focused on specific needs. These special-focus sessions give you insight into recent developments in vocational education across the nation and ideas of what you can do to bring change at the local level.

In-Service or Staff Development Activities

Your state Department of Education or local educational institutions probably sponsor activities (such as workshops, institutes, courses, clinics and visits to business and industry) that bring together vocational instructors and other personnel to update them on topics related to education or occupational specialties. These meetings are usually short (afternoons or one day) and may concentrate on one area or several areas. They help vocational teachers focus on new materials, methods and equipment. You can usually receive CEU (continuing education unit) credit for participation in these activities.

CEUs are recognized as certificates of completion for participation in educational experiences. They are not accepted as college credits, but many local school districts accept CEUs toward recertification (or renewal) of a teaching certificate.

Occupational Updating

Vocational teachers have a special need for continuing contacts with the business and industry areas in which they teach, to keep up with changes in the field. Some occupational updating can be accomplished through in-service or staff development programs, but you will also need to do some updating on your own. Take the initiative to maintain your occupational skills and to learn about changes in your occupational area. Summer internships (either paid or non-paid) in a local business or visits to these sites are ways to keep up your knowledge and skills.

Courses, Seminars, Workshops

Consider taking relevant courses, seminars and workshops at local colleges and universities. Examples of courses that may help you are education courses, updates of technical material or new methodologies for teaching specific skills. You often can get undergraduate or graduate credit for such courses. You also may be able to get credits called continuing education units (CEUs) for participating in certain relevant workshops or seminars, but you will need to check with your individal institution or state certification office whether CEUs will be granted for any particular professional activity. Credit courses may help you get a promotion, recertification or a graduate or undergraduate degree.

In many educational institutions, salary scales are based on the number of graduate credits earned or on having an advanced degree. Postsecondary institutions may require advanced degree work because it is tied to a faculty rank and promotion system.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Just as most successful business people do, you should regularly assess your own performance and professional progress and create a professional development plan for yourself. Periodically set goals and lay out a program of action to achieve those goals. This means looking at your job, reflecting on the many tasks that need to be performed and then setting some priorities for a given period of at least six months. But in addition to planning job-related priorities, you should set goals for your personal, professional and career advancement. A good way to set short-term personal goals may be to ask yourself, "What do I ideally see myself accomplishing in the next six months?" To set long-term goals, try asking yourself, "Where do I ideally see myself in the next six years?"

Areas you may want to address in your professional development plan include:

- **Educational goals,** such as certification or recertification requirements and attainment of an advanced degree
- **Professional organizational involvement** including attendance at professional meetings or conferences, joining key committees or assuming a greater leadership role
- **Career goals** in terms of professional advancement, such as increasing your teaching responsibilities or moving into a management position at your institution.

In the day-to-day business of teaching within or operating a vocational program, vocational teachers often don't take the time to do a careful assessment of their current performance, let alone do serious planning for the future. But you owe it to your students, yourself and your profession to strive for constant improvement. By mapping out a plan of action you will be able to achieve this goal.

APPENDIX

Sample Student Evaluation of Instructor

Instructor: ______________________________ Course: ______________________________

Directions: For each item listed, please provide your rating of the instructor for this course. A rating of "5" indicates you believe the instructor was excellent, while a rating of "1" indicates you believe the instructor was poor.

Poor→Excellent

1. How well did the instructor outline the objectives and requirements of the course? 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENTS: ______________________________

2. How well was the instructor prepared for class? 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENTS: ______________________________

3. How well organized was the instructor in presenting the material? 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENTS: ______________________________

4. How interested did the instructor seem in the subject matter? 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENTS: ______________________________

5. Did the instructor make students feel free to ask questions, disagree or express ideas? 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENTS: ______________________________

6. Was the instructor helpful when students had difficulty? 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENTS: ______________________________

Poor→Excellent

7. Was the method of evaluation in the class appropriate? 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENTS: ______________________________

8. Was the instructor fair and impartial in his/her dealings with students? 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENTS: ______________________________

9. Was the instructor accessible to students outside of class? 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENTS: ______________________________

10. Did the textbook/reading materials make a valuable contribution to the course? 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENTS: ______________________________

11. Did the amount of work required for the course reflect the credit hours received? 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENTS: ______________________________

12. In comparison to other instructors you have had, how would you rate this instructor? 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENTS: ______________________________

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13. Is there something you believe your instructor has done especially well in this course?

14. What specific things do you believe could be done to improve your instructor's teaching of this course?

Thank you for completing this evaluation. All responses will be held in the strictest confidence.

APPENDIX

Selected Professional Journals

Agricultural Education Magazine
c/o Business Manager
10171 Suzanne Road
Mechanicsville, VA 23111

Business Education Forum
Business Education Association
1914 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Career Development for Exceptional Individuals
Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Career Development Quarterly
American Counseling Association
5999 Stevenson Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22304

Community, Technical and Junior College Journal
80 S. Early Street
Alexandria, VA 22304

Computing Teacher
International Council for Computers in Education
University of Oregon
1787 Agate Street
Eugene, OR 97403

Delta Pi Epsilon Journal
Delta Pi Epsilon National Office
Gustavus Adolphus College
St. Peter, MN 56082

Exceptional Children
Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal
American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
1555 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Journal of Agricultural Education
c/o Business Manager
American Assoc. for Agricultural Education
Texas A&M University, FE Box 2588
College Station, TX 77843

Journal of Allied Health
American Society of Allied Health Professions
1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 7000
Washington, DC 20036

Journal of Career Development
Human Sciences Press
72 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10011

Journal of Computer Based Instruction
ADCIS International Headquarters
209 Miller Hall
Western Washington University
Bellingham, WA 98225

Journal of Cooperative Education
Cooperative Education Assoc.
3311 Toledo Terrace, Suite A-101
Hyattsville, MD 20782

Journal of Education for Business
Heldref Publications
4000 Albemarle Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016

Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences
American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
1555 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Journal of Health Education
American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance
1900 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Journal of Industrial Teacher Education
National Association of Industrial and Technical Teacher Education
402 Claxton Building
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996

Journal of Studies in Technical Careers
School of Technical Careers
Southern Illinois Universtiy
908 S. Wall Street
Carbondale, IL 62901

Journal of Technology Education
International Technology Education Association
1914 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Journal of Vocational Family and Consumer Sciences Education
American Association of Home Economics Teacher Education
101 COPS Building
University of Wisconsin
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Journal of Vocational Education Research
c/o Managing Editor
American Vocational Education Research Association
Center on Education and Wrok
University of Wisconsin
1025 West Johnson
Madison, WI 53706

Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education
National Association of Vocational Education Special Needs Personnel
Dept. of Occupational Studies
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602

Marketing Educators' Journal
1375 King Avenue
P.O. Box 12279
Columbus, OH 43212-0279

Perspectives on Marketing
Marketing Education Resources Center
P.O. Box 12279
Columbus, OH 43212

The Technology Teacher
International Technology Education Association
1914 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Vocational Education Journal
American Vocational Association
1410 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

APPENDIX

Professional Organizations

American Vocational Association
Membership Department
1410 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 683-3111
(800) 826-9972

National Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association
P.O. Box 15440
Alexandria, VA 22309
(703) 780-1862

National Business Education Association
1914 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 620-4483

American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
1555 King Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22314
(800) 424-8080

Marketing Education Association
1375 King Avenue, Suite 1-A
P.O. Box 12279
Columbus, OH 43212-0279
(800) 448-0398

International Technology Education Association
1914 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 860-2100

National Association for Trade and Industrial Education
P.O. Box 1665
Leesburg, VA 22075
(703) 777-1740

AMERICAN VOCATIONAL ASSOCIATION
1410 King Street
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

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